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THE MAD RANGER;

OR,

THE HUNTERS OF THE WABASH.

A TALE OF TECUMSEH'S TIME.

BY JOS. E. BADGER, JR.,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING DIME NOVELS:

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I gather about, went over to the door where I lay all day—should have seen him—He did no damage I needn't mind them at least as men done 'em. Amazin' a gun, or it had been Lynd Blod—hadn't

THE MAD RANGER.

CHAPTER I.

EVENTS BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH.

JUST as the November sun sunk beneath the western horizon, two men roused themselves as if from a deep sleep, and sat erect. They were white men, and apparently wood-rangers, judging from their garb and accoutrements. There was no very great difference in their ages ; the eldest not numbering over thirty-one or two years, at the furthest.

The younger was tall and of an athletic build, of dark complexion, hair, eyes and beard ; and was a person who would be very generally termed handsome. His comrade was of very nearly the same height, but slim in proportions, though evidently endowed with more than common strength and activity. He was lank and bony-framed, with stooping shoulders and long neck, upon which sat a small, round head, garnished with a retreating forehead, deep, somber eyes of a pale grayish-blue, long thin nose, wide mouth and pointed chin ; the latter being covered with a thin, straggly beard of a sandy hue, and a moustache to correspond. His face was very sallow and lightly pitted with the small-pox, and his accoutrements were much the same as those of his comrade.

" Well, Peter," said the younger man in a low, drawling tone as he strove to check a yawn, " it's nearly time we were startin', ain't it ? "

" You ain't in 'arrest, be ye, now ? "

" If you mean about entering the Prophet's town, I say yes, I am. I tol'd you what I was after, and if you don't like to go, why did you volunteer ? You know I never go back on my words," somewhat impatiently replied the younger scout.

" Look-a-here, Uriah Barham, Es-quire, I'm Peter Shafer, sometimes called Lyin' Pete by them what don't know my modest voracity, and I don't back down wuth a cent. As old

Uncle Georgy—Gin'ral Washington, you know ; that's what I used to call him when I served on his staff—said to me, often, ‘ Shafy, old boy,’ says he, ‘ give me a rigiment o’ sech men as you be, and I’ll clean out the hull teetotal univarsal world, and not hafe try !’ That is to say, I’m with you fer the hull job, and ef you jest say the word, I’ll take old Tecumseh and his prophesyin’ brother by the scruffs o’ thar necks, and knock thur heads together tell they wont think o’ fight ag’in fer a coon’s eye. I kin do it—jist as *easy!*”

“ I don’t doubt it at all, Pete,” laughed Barham, “ but you must promise not to let your angry passions rise, this time. You see if you should kill them all off now, ’twould put a stop to our fun.”

“ That’s so Uriah, and I’m glad you told me, for I’d jest about made up my mind to take the hull intire town back to camp a pris’ner. But I won’t, now.”

“ Good ! But come on ; it is plenty dark now and we have some distance to travel,” and the two scouts set off through the woods at a rapid pace that precluded all conversation.

The silent celerity with which they traversed the thick and tangled underbrush, spoke well for their skill as scouts and wood-rangers ; and as they glided rapidly along, their dusky forms appeared those of some forest spirits, rather than weighty flesh and blood. They were apparently well acquainted with their whereabouts, for they maintained a direct course without faltering or pausing for deliberation.

It was a perilous mission upon which they were bound, and one where the slightest indiscretion might prove fatal to one or both. Of their own accord the two scouts had volunteered to enter the town of Elskwatawa, the Prophet, brother of the even then renowned Shawnee, Tecumseh, to learn the real intentions and plans of the allied tribes, if possible.

It was at that period when General Harrison with his little army was marching upon the town near the mouth of the river that afterward gave him his glorious sobriquet, “ TIPPECANOE.”

At length the two scouts had arrived near the town, and paused for a time to consult. Shafer declared that he knew every inch of the ground, and that he could guide Barham direct to the council-lodge, were he blindfolded and although the young ranger knew how given Pete was to lying and

boasting, yet he believed that he was telling the truth now and resolved to trust in his knowledge.

From their position they could see that there was an unusual bustle in and about the town, and could hear the subdued murmur of many voices, while by the light of a huge bonfire, a crowd of the dusky savages were faintly visible. And this fact was looked upon as insuring their safety, for among such excitement, the two scouts believed that they would not be noticed, if proper precautions were adopted; and although brave and daring, they were not reckless.

"It's better for us this way, Uri," whispered Shafer, "for we kin go all through 'em without bein' noticed. You see they're goin' to hold a big powwow out o' doors, and won't be thinkin' o' strangers; so if we kin pass the sentinels, we'll be all right. Then when old Tecumseh begins to palaver, I'm goin' to walk right up and take him pris'ner; you see 'f I don't, now."

"And what'll you do then?" asked Barham, idly, while his brain was busy revolving a certain plan, and not heeding his comrade's boasts.

"Why, I'll bind him over to keep the peace, take supper with him, and then go home all covered with *ge-lory*, of course!"

"You're a fool, Shafer; but come on."

"You're too ginerous, 'Riah; keep your own pet names; I don't want 'em," muttered Pete, as he crouched low down and glided stealthily forward, closely followed by Barham.

It was plainly evident that there must be sentinels set around the town, or else the inhabitants would not have seemed so free and unguarded in their actions, and to pass these, the two scouts knew would be a task attended with no little danger, and require their utmost skill. One false step might prove their destruction.

The night was dark and cloudy, and while it so far favored the scouts as to render their forms dusky and obscure, it also served the same for the sentinels, wherever they might chance to be, and knowing their peril, Shafer slowly advanced toward the village with every sense keenly upon the alert. Did they chance to come in collision with the Indians, nothing would be left for it but a race for life, and although there was little

doubt but what the darkness would insure their effecting an escape, such a discovery would render their scheme futile.

They were already mentally congratulating themselves upon passing the barrier in safety, when with a low grunt of surprise a dusky figure uprose before them, peering curiously through the gloom. Acting upon their preconcerted plan, Shafer sprung forward and grasped the sentinel firmly by the throat, thus effectually checking all outcry.

The savage was a powerful man, and struggled desperately, but only for a few short moments; then he was gradually borne back with resistless force, striving in vain to bear up against the steel-like muscles of his slender antagonist. And then he strove to cry aloud, to warn his comrades, but the vicelike grip upon his throat stifled all utterance, and then Barham coolly pressed his long knife to the hilt in the savage's heart, and then Shafer gradually relaxed his grasp.

"'Twas jest as *easy!*—" he began, panting, but Uriah touched his shoulder with a faint hiss.

"There's another one of them coming up! they must have heard the noise," he whispered, angrily.

"Hunker down—into the bush and take this bird along, while I go meet whoever it is. I'll fool 'em some way or other, ef I have to swaller 'em alive. I kin do it—jest as *easy!*" muttered Pete, as he slowly rose erect, having dropped his cap lest it should betray him to whoever was approaching.

In the darkness he did not greatly fear his features or dress being recognized, and owing to his previous calling as Indian trader, he was well conversant with the dialect common to the tribes along the Wabash border. With native audacity he resolved to play the part of the dead sentinel, trusting to his lucky star to carry him through in safety.

"Ugh! has my brother gone crazy that he makes such a loud noise? If Elskwatawa was near, Mohenesto's squaw would be a widow before the sun shines again," gravely observed the new-comer, with a significant wave of his hand at the two men met.

"The Elk that Calls is sorry, but he will not forget his brother's words. The Singing Death crept near him, and made its leap. But Mohenesto was too quick. He sprung up and

crushed its head. That was the noise my brother heard," glibly lied Shafer, glancing about as if in search of the rattle-snake.

After a few more words the veritable savage left his counterfeit brother, and returned to his post, while Barham warmly congratulated Peter upon his audacious wit, and then, after stowing the ill-fated "Elk that Calls" away among the bushes, the two scouts once more resumed their progress. They paused upon the outskirts of the village, and while discussing what should be their future course, keenly scanned the scene before them.

In a spacious open square near the center of the village was built an enormous bonfire, and around it were gathered hundreds of dusky warriors, listening to the fiery words of a stalwart orator, who stood upon a sort of rude stage or platform. His features could not be distinguished by the scouts, owing to the long drooping branches of a large tree that intervened, which was at no great distance from the speaker.

"Look-a-thar, Uri," whispered Shafer, "see that 'ere tree? Well, I'm goin' to shin up that, and by hidin' among the branches, I kin hear every word them joskins say."

"But can you do it without being perceived, Pete?"

"I kin—jest as *easy!* I wouldn't make no more noise nor a squerrill, and they're too busy to notice any thin' 'cept him," responded Shafer, confidently.

"Then I'm with you, my boy," and with this desperate resolve the two scouts dropped flat upon the ground, and glided noiselessly over the open space toward the tree.

This was reached in safety, and unheeded by the excited crowd the men grasped the low-hanging branches and cautiously reached the main trunk of the tree, where they secured a position from whence they could plainly perceive all that passed below, and hear every word of the speakers, without danger to themselves, unless indeed the tree should be searched.

Although Barham but imperfectly comprehended the *patois* common among the different tribes there congregated, Shafer was perfectly familiar with it, and he hastily interpreted the words of the orator to his companion. The one who now had the stand was a well-built and muscular Indian, over whose shoulder was flung a curiously-embroidered robe, and Barham

gazed at him earnestly when Pete declared it to be no less a personage than Elskwatawa, the famous Prophet of the allied tribe.

"My children!" said the Prophet, "there is but one thing for you to do. These pale-faced dogs are overrunning the whole of our country. They come like the waves of the great salt lake, and if we sit still with bowed heads, they will swallow us up. They will take our lands. They will kill our squaws and our children. They will dig up the bones of our fathers, and give them to their pappooses to play with. But shall we sit still? No! let us rise up as one man and push them back to drown in the great water from beyond which they came!"

"The great White Chief is coming with his warriors to drive us from our homes, but they are fools! They do not know how many we are. That we are ten to their one. Let them come! If they try to cross the Wabash, we will take their scalps and drive them into the river, where their bones will whiten the sandbar, and their flesh fatten the fishes!"

"These white men are not warriors; they are calico-traders. Their hands are weak, and their eyes blind, like the mole. They can not see in the dark, and will run and hide in the grass when the owl hoots! We will fight them in the dark and make a noise like the panther fighting for its cubs. They will run, and—"

But Shafer at this point suddenly paused in his interpretation, although the Prophet still continued. Barham glanced around at his comrade in surprise.

"What is the matter, Pete? Why don't you go on?"

"Uriah, you ain't a coward, be you?" asked Shafer, solemnly.

"You ought to be able to answer that yourself, Peter; but why do you ask? This is no time for fooling."

"If I tell you somethin', you won't jump down and run ou thar to be safe, will you?"

Barham looked at his companion anxiously, and although he well knew the quizzical nature of the scout, he could not help feeling that there was something extraordinary beneath all this. Shafer was glaring at his chum in a strange manner, while his head was bent as if in acute listening, and one hand slowly drew his long knife.

"Pete, what do you mean? what're you going to do with that knife?"

"You don't hear nothin', do you, 'Riah?"

Buham exerted his every power, and even stilled his breath the better to listen. And gradually a deep frown settled over his features. He could faintly distinguish a slipping, grating rustle among the branches overhead!

"Urn," slowly whisp'rel Shafer, "I reckon we're in a trap *This critter or somebody up in this tree afore us!"*

"What will you do?"

"If they let us be I won't pester 'em, be sure! But if they raise any rumpus, why I'll—"

"What?"

"Take the pesky varmint and knock that datted Prophet on always into the middle o' next week with 'im! I kin do it—just as *cuz!*" muttered Pete, cautiously turning around upon the limb so as to face the body of the tree.

The grating noise gradually drew near, but it was so faint, that unless to very keen ears, or those preternaturally excited, it would have been confounded with the faint rustling among the leaves by the light, fitful breeze.

The savages grasped their weapons more firmly and awaited the result in stern silence. They knew that did a conflict actually ensue, the noise would alarm the savages below, and then the result was easily imagined. Caught in the act of espial, having probably overheard the secret plans of the Indians, they would be doomed to instant death, if not to torture.

But was their neighbor an enemy? If a human being, did not this very silence proclaim it to be a friend, or at least a foe of those below, and for its own sake, would it not be content to pass on in peace?

And then the lower limbs of a human body dropped into view. The two savages held their breath and gazed in silence. Then a man dropped down to the butt of the limb upon which they were sitting, and slowly advanced his head toward them, gazing into their faces with eyes that seemed like twin coals of fire.

"Mind your eye, old f—l," muttered Shafer, and half-raised his knife, "cause we've got powder all dry, and ef it catches fire we'd be blowed to nowtar, all to once!"

"Not him—not him! Will we *never* meet?" murmured the strange being, in a low, mournful voice, and then with a shake of his head, turned and uttered a low hiss.

As if in answer to this signal a huge form dropped down to his side with the lightness of a cat, and glanced at the scouts. Then the first man noiselessly descended the tree, and as the other followed, Peter again said:

"Say, Darkness, ar' thar any more o' yot up thar?"

"No, mas'r, 'cept dem out dar," nodding toward the excited savages around the fire, and then nimbly dropping from sight.

"Don't wonder 'at it's dark, up here, when *he's* around," muttered Pete, uneasily.

"Do you know who they are?" whispered Barham, agitatedly.

"Don't I jest! the White Devil and his black imp!"

"The Maniac Ranger! I thought so, although I never met him before, and always regarded the story a myth."

"Well, now he's gone, I don't care. Mebbe it's a good sign, for he's a friend to the whites. Leastwise, he's a enemy to the reds, and that 'mounts to 'bout the same. But look a-yonder!"

"A white man, by all that's holy!" cried Barham, in tones louder than was prudent, considering their proximity to the savages.

It was indeed the form of a white man that now met their eyes, just mounting the stand. He spoke in English, and in such tones that every word was overheard by the spies concealed amid the thick branches of the oak tree.

"Brethren! My skin is white, but my heart is red, like your own. I am an Indian, and I hate the pale-faces who are your enemies. Many of you have seen me before, and can say if my tongue is crooked. I have promised you much, but have I not kept those promises? I look around me and I see guns, hatchets, knives, cloth and powder that I have given you. And why? Because these white dogs are my enemies, also, and I wish them killed.

"I come from the great red-coated chief from far away over the water, and he bade me thank his brave brothers for him, and to tell them that before the warm breath of the

Great Spirit melts the snow and ice, he will send many men to help you in this work. He will send so many that the eye will grow blind in trying to count them; so many that if each man would pick up one grain of sand and carry away with him, the rocks would be left bare for more than a day's journey—”

“Good Lord!” exclaimed Shafer, “talk about lyin’! Mister, you kin take my hat.”

“Hush, Pete,” cautioned Barham.

“—And each one of these white braves will bring his cloth and weapons, and when they go back home they will give them all to the red-men. I promise you that each brave whom I see here, now, shall have a horse-load of scalps, and as many arms and fine horses as he can count while smoking a pipe bowl empty. And all of your women shall have plenty of white slaves to work for them, so that—”

At this juncture the fluent promises of the orator were interrupted in an unceremonious manner by an occurrence that bade fair to cause our two friends not a little trouble, and turned their every thought upon one point—that of escape. This interruption came in the shape of a rifle-shot, and the white man threw up his arms with a thrilling shriek of agony, and fell headlong from the platform among his startled auditors.

The report came from the ground, almost directly beneath the tree, where our two friends had sought refuge, and so unexpected was the occurrence that they nearly fell from the limb as they started to their feet. And when the momentary stupor of the savages had passed, the entire crowd poured toward the spot, yelling and brandishing their weapons like fiends incarnate.

“What now, Pete?” anxiously asked Barham, as they gazed at each other in consternation.

“Holler out and tell ‘em we’ve run away,” suggested Shafer, “or else fire, then jump down and whip the hull teetotal crowd.”

“Don’t be a fool, Pete! It’s life or death now. Let’s climb up further.”

“What on? We’d only have the ladder to fall. Lay down and mebbe they’ll miss us.”

The savages had by this time surrounded the tree, and it was plainly evident that they suspected it as being the point from whence the marksman had discharged the fatal shot. Lighted torches were hurriedly brought, and waved over the heads of the infuriated red-skins, as they glanced upward, striving to pierce the dense obscurity.

The two scouts now heard the rustling sound of several men ascending the tree, and knowing that little short of a miracle could save them from being discovered, were almost tempted to leap down into the midst of their enemies, and make a bold stroke for liberty. But one glance told them that such a course would be certain death, and so, grasping their weapons in grim despair, they awaited the course of events with external calmness.

By peering over the huge limb that supported them, the spies could faintly distinguish the form of the foremost savage, whose head was now nearly upon a level with them. Finally bracing himself, Shafer, who was nearest to the trunk, replaced his knife in its sheath, and then as the red-man stood nearly against him, shot out his long sinewy arms and grasped his foe by the neck with a death-grip.

At this moment, as if to drown the struggling of the captive, a loud double report rung out from the outside of the village, and a piercing shriek arose from among the crowd. Then, as if this was the signal, a long, peculiar wail arose from near the point where the scouts had passed the cordon of sentinels, and after a moment's breathless pause, was taken up by the surging crowd below, who then, as one man, darted off in the direction from whence the double alarm had come.

And during the confusion aent this occurrence the convulsive writhings of the savage, who was fast becoming unconscious beneath the terrible grip that was upon his throat, passed unheeded, and even those who had followed him into the tree, turned and descended without a suspicion of the truth.

With a vigorous effort Shafer drew up the inanimate body and placed it across the limb before him. Then drawing a long breath and dashing the drops of perspiration from his brow, he muttered:

"Holy Jerusalem! Uri, scratch me on the back, quick! or I'll bu'st right out! Jest to think! No I won't either, 'less

I'll go plum crazy and holler like fun. Who'd 'a' thunk it, anyhow?"

"Not so loud, Pete, they may hear you," anxiously cautioned Batham. "But that red-skin—is he safe?"

"If he could speak, I reckon he'd say *not*, by a jugful; but as it is, I consait he *is*. Lord! didn't I do it up slick?" chuckled the scout.

"Indeed you did, Pete, but for all that, I believe that we owe our lives to that strange being, the Mad Ranger," solemnly replied Uriah.

"Well, if we did, he got us into the scrape, so it's only square. But what shall we do? Wait here till those imps come back, or git down and run off with the hull town—or throw it into the river?"

"Don't be a fool, Pete; of course we must run for it; it won't be long before some of them will return, and they may take a notion to search the tree, after all. Come, let's go."

"I'm agreeable. But if they do s'arch the tree they'll find somethin', for I'll leave this party bird here, jest as he *is*."

"Is he dead, do you think?"

"No, only jest sleepin', like; Lord! wouldn't I like to be here when he wakes up? Fust he'll kick out, then flop his arms; then fast thing he knows he'll tumble right out o' bed, end over eend. Then won't he cuss 'cause the bedstid legs was so high?" chuckled Shafer, whom no amount of peril could render oblivious to any thing that seemed like a joke.

The scouts nimbly descended from the tree and then crouching low down, left the village by a circuitous route, in almost the opposite direction from that where the Maniac Ranger had led off the savages, and gained the shelter of the forest without any further adventure.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROSE OF THE WILDERNESS.

AT some half a score miles distant from the town of Elkwater, the Prophet, stood a small but cosy-looking log-cabin of one story, nestling close to the foot of a hill, and only a short distance from the Wabash river. At the time we ask attention to it—some hours previous to the events detailed in our first chapter, on the afternoon of the same day, its occupants were three in number; one woman and two men. And as we will have occasion to revert to them more or less frequently, a brief description may not be amiss.

The woman, who was busily employed in removing the dinner service from the rude table, was apparently not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, although of well-matured and superbly-rounded form. Rather above than below the medium height, her form was most symmetrically proportioned; the well-shaped head was poised upon a neck of swan-like curvature and dazzling whiteness, the outlines blending with the sloping and softly-rounded shoulders and expanding into the rich fullness of the bust. Her complexion was dazzlingly pure, despite a slight olive tinge that might be inherent, or produced by the action of the sun; with the tint of roses upon her cheeks. The luxuriant rich brown—almost black—hair, showered in myriads of ringlets upon either side of a face somewhat too round, perhaps, for perfect beauty, but which, despite that deficiency of the classic oval, was unquestionably lovely, and was secured by a simple band of crimson ribbon, from her forehead. Her large black eyes were somewhat melting in their look, but there was a peculiar proud curve of the short upper lip that told of strong likes and dislikes beneath that calm, placid sweetness, and of a will that might break, but would never bend if once firmly resolved.

Of the men, the one who was apparently the host, was not far from fifty years of age, and preserved a hard, stern look upon his wrinkled and careworn face that told of either great

sorrow and troubles, or of deep and black crimes. Tall and muscularly built, he yet retained most of the lightness of youth in his bearing, and was one that most men would think twice about before engaging in a struggle with.

The other man appeared to be about five or six and thirty, and was of a tall, athletic build, with a singularly handsome face and winning smile. There was a smooth affability about him that involuntarily reminded one of the old adage—a silk glove covering a hand of steel; and his large blue eyes appeared open and frank. He was dressed—like his companion—in a suit common to foresters of that period, and armed with a knife and brace of pistols.

The elder man answered to the name of Seba Ambold, the woman was his daughter, Fanny, and the third was Paul Gisborne, an Englishman.

"Come, Ambold, is it not time for us to be going?" said Gisborne, in a low tone, remarkable for its rich, musical compass.

"Yes, but wait for me a moment outside, Paul. I wish to speak to Fan for a bit," replied the borderer, with a start, as if roused from some deep reverie.

The Englishman promptly left the house, after a peculiar glance at the elder man, and sauntered slowly down toward the river-bank. Ambold knocked the ashes from his pipe, and coughed as if the desired communication was difficult to utter, while his daughter glanced at him from beneath her long dark lashes, with a deepening flush suffusing her cheek.

"Fan," at length uttered the borderer, "you know what I want to say?"

"How should I, father?" with a faint uplifting of her brow.

"Now what's the use, girl? You must know, and so what's the good of beating 'round the bush? But now listen to me and don't interrupt. It is hard for me to say it, for you know how I love you, girl; but then it must come sooner or later, and now's as good a time as any, I s'pose."

"If it troubles you, then why not let it pass, father?" quickly said Fanny, yet a little nervously.

"There you go again! Didn't I tell you not to interrupt me? You'll get me mad pretty soon, and then scold me

because I don't talk just right. There—don't speak—hear me out. You know Paul Gisborne?"

"I should; has he not been staying here for a month or more?" with a slight smile.

"And what if he has? Haven't I a right to ask who I please to see me?" irascibly cried Ambold. "Then if you know so much you must know more—don't you, eh? Why don't you answer?"

"You told me not to speak, father."

"But now I tell you *to* speak! Do you know—say?"

"I would rather you told me, father. Or, indeed, I would prefer that you drop the subject, now and forever. It can do no good, and will only cause hard feelings between us both," she added, in a tone of sad pleading.

"But I *will* speak of it, and you must hear me, and there must be no hard feelings about it, either, unless you want to get me mad. And Fanny—you have never seen me mad yet, and I hope you never may!" he suddenly added, his choleric tone changing and a gloomy look overspreading his features. "I was mad once—my God! how mad!—and it made me what I now am—a fugitive and an outcast!" and he bowed his gray head upon his hands and suffered his pipe to drop unheeded to the floor.

"Father," murmured Fanny, gliding to his side, and carefully smoothing his hair with her shapely hand.

"There, there, girl, don't talk that way," he cried, resuming his former tone and look as if by magic, while he thrust his child's hand violently away. "Don't talk like that, I say. You look too much like *her*, now."

"Like who, father?"

"There you go again! Didn't I tell you never to pry into my affairs or I'd get mad? Seems to me you want to drive me crazy, and done with it! But listen—and mind ye, I'm your father, now, and being older than you—or how could I be your father, if I wasn't, I'd like to know—as I say, I know what is best for your own good. You're getting old now, that is, old for a girl, and it is time you were married, not to mention the troubles all over the country, that may take me off at any moment, and leave you all alone."

"There—don't speak—hold your tongue, can't you, until

I'm through? As I was saying, when you put me on the other track, there is Paul Gisborne, my old friend—old because I've known him so long, I mean—and a well-educated, generous, bold and rich gent'l-man, and one, too, without a fault, unless you call it a fault his loving you too well. He says that he has not spoken to you of his wishes yet, but like a man should do, has asked my good word first. Well, he has that, with all my heart, and now nothing remains for it but a word from you."

"Father," slowly said Fanny, drawing a little back and more erect as she spoke in earnest tones, "I can never speak that word."

"What do you mean, child? That you will not obey me? Or perhaps you did not understand me fully; I mean that Paul Gisborne wants you for a wife, that I want you to marry him; and if my wishes are not enough, I add my command—you shall marry him!"

"I understand you perfectly, at first, father," firmly replied Fanny, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushing, "and I understand, also, what I said. I can not marry him; and more, I will not marry Paul Gisborne. Father," she added, her tone lowering to one of solemn entreaty, "I do not wish to anger you, but I do not love this man, because I don't believe he is what he pretends. It seems as though he wore a mask, and that beneath his courteous looks he concealed a heart of the blackest guile. No, I am right. I tell you that that man is after no good; that his heart is filled with deceit, and that unless you are upon your guard, he will bring you to ruin. Father, I believe that I could die for you, but marry this man—never!"

"Fanny, listen to me. I have heard all you have said, although you are bitterly slandering one of my best friends: the only man who stood by me bravely in my great trouble. But there is a boundary to all things. I have humored you too much, perhaps, for your own good and mine—but in this I am determined. I say that you shall marry Gisborne, and if you oppose me, so much the worse for yourself. There are two sides to my nature—two men in me, and you have only seen the pleasantest. But beware! I tell you that if you drive me to desperation, the result will be terrible, and you will be the

sufferer. Now think well over this while I am gone, and remember that the whole course of your future life hinges upon one word. If you decide yes, all will be well; but if not—! There, I have done. Now good-by, for to-day. I will be back to-night, but don't sit up for me, nor had you best go far from the house. Danger is upon every hand and there is no telling who or where it may strike. But think over what I have said."

So saying Seba Ambold left the cabin and rejoined his comrade. There was a solemn warning in his tones, more than in his words, that caused the bright cheeks of the maiden to pale, and sinking upon a chair, she bowed her head and wept bitter tears of sorrow.

For nearly an hour she sat thus, without stirring, but then she arose and went about her daily work with a composed and even calm look upon her features. But her cheery, mellow voice was silent, and she moved with a listless demeanor that was unusual to her. It was plainly evident that her mind was fully resolved, and moreover, that it was in direct opposition to her father's counsel.

When her duties were performed, Fanny Ambold doffed her hat and left the house, strolling down toward the river-bank, with seemingly aimless steps and a weary look upon her face, that plainly told what a painful struggle she had undergone. Then pausing she sat down at the foot of a huge mossy tree that hung far out over the smooth, tranquil river, and leaning against the trunk, sunk into a deep reverie.

For some time she sat thus, unconscious of her surroundings and of the lapse of time, reflecting sadly upon the last bitter words of her father. She knew that this was no idle threat of his, and that the struggle between them would be strong and desperate.

In ordinary he was very kind, and thoughtful of her every wish, although he expressed this feeling in a strange, fitful way. It indeed seemed, as he had said, that there were two beings in one. The one was kind and loving, almost passionately so—the other was cold and stern, or sometimes, wild and fitful.

It almost seemed to her that the e must be one dark and dreadful page in the life of her parent; as if at times he was suffering from some fearful remorse, and this thought had often

clouded her brow and filled her heart with a vague kind of terror and sadness, although she strove hard to banish the idea.

Suddenly Fanny was aroused from her reverie, and raised her head with a startled air, for the sound of approaching footsteps met her ear. As her father had said in warning, a dark cloud of danger hung over the land, and at any moment the blow might fall, although thus far the Indians who had passed their house had appeared very friendly and cordial toward the borderer, yet none could tell how long this state of affairs might last.

And hence it was that the maiden glanced up in alarm. The sight that met her eyes, if not one to exactly confirm her fears, was yet not calculated to reassure her, and she sprung to her feet in readiness to flee for security to the cabin.

Large eyes, dark as the berry of the blackthorn, were fixed upon the maiden's face and seemed filled with the fire of insanity, so intense and burning were their glances. The face was ghastly white, and thin almost to emaciation, although the features were of a singularly classic regularity, while the skin was smooth and beardless, or else closely shaven. He bore a short, heavy, double-barreled rifle, evidently of English manufacture richly ornamented with flakes of silver and gold, while similarly inlaid pistols and knife were at his belt.

Close behind this figure stood the tall, muscular, almost gigantic form of a negro. Considerably over six feet in height and with members in proportion, one would almost unconsciously experience a sensation of awe as the eye roved over his magnificent frame. Similarly armed, only with weapons more suitable for his size, there was a peculiarly solemn, gloomy expression upon his chon features, well according with that of his companion and apparent master.

When Fanny arose as if to flee, the white stranger slowly advanced and made a peculiar gesture with one hand as if in entreaty, and spoke; his tones sounding low and musical, although with a strange wild cadence that caused an involuntary thrill of alarm to overpower the form of the maiden.

"Don't be alarmed, fair lady, for we mean no harm. We would be your friends—my faithful Scipio and I."

"I do not know you," faltered the girl, standing as if fascinated by the burning glance of the stranger, wishing to flee

yet constrained to remain still, as if by some power superior to her own will.

The stranger laughed; a low laugh, as peculiar as his own appearance.

"There is no one knows us, Scipio and I; we are strangers to all. No, not to all—I forgot myself! There is one who would know us; one, but ah! I fear I am wrong! Lady, you are fair and comely to look upon, and something tells me that truth and honesty dwell within your heart. I am right, am I not? Yes, I *must* be right! One so lovely as you would not seek to deceive a poor wanderer!"

"If there is any thing I can tell you, or do for you, let me know it and I will try my best to serve you," replied Fanny, leaning against the tree and half closing her eyes, struggling vainly against some strange influence.

A feeling of faintness, as strange as new to her robust and vigorous frame, seemed to assail her, and she strove to avert her eyes from the burning ones of the stranger; but in vain. The gleaming orbs enthralled hers and held her as if spell-bound. Then the man spoke once again:

"I will trust you, for I know that you will tell the truth. Let me come close and whisper in your ear, for there are wicked men around, who would betray me if they heard my words. Tell me—nay, do not start and tremble so. I would not harm or alarm thee for the world!" he added, earnestly, as Fanny shrunk convulsively back at his approach.

"Tell me, and I pray you by the name of the great and good God above us, to speak truly and candidly—tell me, have you seen my Myra? You would know her, and you could not forget her, for she is a little angel! So sweet and cunning, the little bird, that I know you must have loved her. Day—have you seen her—my little Myra?"

Fanny shrunk back in terror. The glowing eyes seemed to pierce through hers down deep into her heart like barbed arrows, and in the wild expression of the strange being she fancied she could trace the withering touch of insanity.

"You do not speak, and my heart is breaking—nay, I forget. It broke long, long since, when he murdered my love and stole my child! Ah, you, too, think I am mad! but you are wrong. See, I am calm now, and quiet. I can even control

the buttons upon your dress, so that I am not mad. But I suffered enough—my God! yes, enough to have made a man like a thousand times over, had I possessed so many minds; but I am not mad!" and with a powerful effort the strange being calmed his features, and the intense fire died away from his eyes, leaving a mournful tenderness in its stead.

"Now tell me, have you seen my little Myra—my dove-eyed darling? She came this way; she must have come this way for I have searched in every direction and in every spot in this. Oh, yes, you must have seen her—perhaps she is even now in yonder house! Perhaps she is even now behind the door and laughing in silent glee to see me searching in vain. Come! let us go and find her, and she shall sit upon your lap and talk in her soft baby voice to you, as she used to do with me. Come!"

"Stay," cried Fanny, as the stranger touched her arm and bade her to follow him toward the house. "I have not seen your child, and she is not there. Indeed she is not!"

"Ah, say God! not there? Are you also, seeking to deceive me?" and he gazed keenly into her clear unflinching eyes. "But no—I can see the truth in your face—you do not lie—you can not, with such eyes! But where then is my child—my little Myra? I have sought every place but this, and where can she be hiding?" he murmured, in a broken tone, while an imploring look overpread his wan and pallid features.

"I do not know, but where did you lose her, and when? For your face is a strange one to me, and I thought I knew all the neighbors."

"Where did I lose her? At my home—that home which he entered and made forever desolate—many leagues from here, away across the great waters."

"Then she can not be here," gently returned Fanny, feeling a deep pity for the poor wrecked life of him who stood before her. "If she was young—a babe, as you say, how could she come so far, over here?"

"It brought her—he stole her from my arms and fled over to this country, where he thought I would not find her, and then they said that I was mad and shut me up in a horrible den. But Scipio, here—my brave, good, strong Scipio!—he

set me free and I followed upon the robber's track. But the country is so vast, and there are so many people in it, that I can do nothing. My child, my poor innocent babe cries to me for help and I can not rescue it!" and the strange man sunk down upon the ground and with bowed head wept bitterly.

Fanny turned toward the negro, who stood leaning moodily upon his long rifle, gazing upon the form of his master, while the muscles of his great throat worked as if in agony.

"Tell me—if you can—who he is, and what is the truth of all this?"

"I will, missee, 'ca'se I b'lieve you be good an' true. You won't nebber tell ob dis ef I tole you?"

"Not if you wish me to keep silence."

"Den I tole ye. Ebber so long 'go, mo' y'ars dan old Scip knows how to count on his fingers, a bad man stole lilly mississ Myra, an' runned off, a'ter puttin' *him* in a place dey called de 'sylum, tellin' dem all dat he was crazy. Den I got him loose an' we come ober yere to hunt after de chile. But we hain't nebber found nor heerd tell on eider ob dem, an' I mor'n 'spects dey is bofe dead. But marse, he won't hear to it, an' as you see, it's brung him to dis yere fix."

"Then the child must be a woman, now."

"Ef she is libbin', I reckon she is. But I knows, 'most, dat she is dead. Dar's somesin dat tells me so, w'en I sleep an' w'en I wake up. But *he* don't t'ink so, an' I must foller on tell de eend—which I don't t'ink is fur off, 'ca'se he gits thinner an' weaker ebry day—so's to keep him out o' danger," and the great sobs choked his further words.

Fanny averted her gaze and could not suppress a sigh at the mournful history she had just learned, although it seemed almost too improbable to be true. Gradually the sobs of the Maniac Ranger grew less intense and painful, until he started up with a sad smile illuminating his careworn features, and said:

"Lady, forgive me if I have alarmed or annoyed you by my words or actions, but my great grief overpowered my will and I could not restrain my feelings. Something seemed to tell me that here I could at last find my lost child, and when you told me I was wrong, my heart well nigh broke. But I must

go—I must wander on and on, without rest or peace until I find him or her. But I will come again, lady, for while I am with you, something seems to soothe the biting pain that gnaws at my heart-strings, and makes me less unhappy. Lady, if the prayers of the outcast and friendless wanderer are worthy your acceptance, they are yours. May you never know grief or sorrow; may happiness and peace ever drive care and woe from your fireside. Come, Scipio, come!" and with a parting wave of his hand, the strange being—the man whom many called the Maniac Ranger, or the White Devil—plunged into the forest and was lost to view.

Fanny slowly removed her gaze from the point where her visitors had vanished, and returned to the house, her brain pondering over the strange words she had listened to, and in measure diverted from her own cause of sorrow and apprehension. It was now nearly night, and she proceeded about her usual household duties.

CHAPTER III

A RACE FOR LIFE.

ALTHOUGH the two scouts, Barham and Shafer, had succeeded in leaving the Prophet's town in safety, they well knew that they were far from being out of danger. The deadly insult shown the assembled Indians—that of an enemy penetrating almost into their very midst and picking off an orator while addressing the hundreds of armed men—was such as would not be allowed to go unavenged, if human skill could avenge it, and the entire country would be scoured by the enraged blood-seekers.

After leaving the village a few hundred yards the comrade scouts drew up beside a tree and consulted upon the best course for them to pursue. Shafer spoke first:

"I'll tell you, 'Rian, how we'll fix it. Let's git up a big force o' them an I then rush right spang through the middle o' them. Them what don't git out o' the way, why they'd better—that's all!"

"Now you're talking sense, Pete—*your* sense, I mean, which is nonsense. Be in earnest for once, can't you? I tell you we are in a bad fix and one that we'll have to use head-work to get out of. Holl on—I know what you're going to say, but it won't do. I know they all left in *that* direction, which, by the way, is the one we must take. It would be easy enough to run off up this way, but that would carry us exactly away from the army, and we must get there by the shortest route, or our news will be old, and all our trouble and risk go for nothing."

"Didn't I tell you we must run right through 'em? and now you say the same thing! But I s'pose you want all the credit, so work it your own way."

"Now look here, Pete, we must travel, and the quicker the better. I move that we strike up above for a mile or two, then turn to the river and either swim down with a log or find a canoe. We can fool 'em that way, I think."

"Well, I don't care; any thin' at all, jest so you're satisfied. So come along. 'Pears to me that I kin smell a Injun not far from here; 'ither a red-skin or a pole-cat, I don't know 'z ally which."

The scouts knew too well their probable danger to run any unnecessary risks, and so all conversation was dropped as they resumed their journey, and Shafer, although such an incalculable talker, for once held his peace. The absence of a noise, while it made their progress more tedious and tardy, was a source of congratulation, as it rendered their forms almost indistinguishable through the dense gloom cast by the trees and undergrowth, while they were by far too skillful to make any striking noise in their passage.

They had traveled perhaps half a mile, when Shafer, who was in advance, owing to his superior power of vision in the night-time, abruptly paused, with a low hiss. Burkham imitated his example and noiselessly brought his rifle before him in position ready for instant use, if necessary.

Almost directly before them, and at but a few yards' distance, were faintly discernible the forms of two men, given out in low, guarded tones, but which were sufficiently distinct to have attracted the keen ear of Peter, the scout. This also told them that they were Indians, and, consequently, enemies.

It was equally evident that they had not themselves been observed by the savages, owing to their standing close beside a clump of tall bushes, while the enemy were in the open glade and upon a slight knoll. But their suspicions had been aroused, for they suddenly ceased their consultation and began to slowly advance.

A movement now upon the part of the scouts, would be fatal, and lead to instant discovery, after which nothing would be left for it but flight, as the enemy might be, and probably were, in force. And so, motionless as the surrounding tree-trunks, the two scouts breathlessly awaited the result.

A conflict seemed inevitable, but still there was a hope—faint indeed—that the Indians might pass them in the gloom without notice, or else their suspicions be lulled by the dead silence. But such was fated not to be the case.

When at a half-score yards' distance, the foremost savage paused and bending forward, fixed his bas-disk gaze directly upon Shafer's form, and drew his gleaming hatchet. But a suspicion still remained that they might be friends, and as he drew back his weapon, the savage uttered a low sentence in his own language. Pete knew that further pause would be worse than useless, and with a low cry or rather howl, sprung forward with drawn knife.

At the same instant the hatchet of the Indian hissed through the air; but it missed its mark, although from no fault of its owner. As he sprung forward, Shafer tripped over a vine and fell to the ground with an involuntary cry, and he only felt the wind of the missile as it hurtled past his head and struck Barham a violent blow upon the shoulder, with its handle.

Thinking that his comrade was either killed or badly wounded, Uriah threw up his rifle and fired without pausing to take aim at the savage. But at such close quarters a miss was impossible, and a wild death-yell ensued as the tall form sprang quivering into the air.

The surrounding woods now echoed with demoniac cries and roars until it seemed like Pandemonium let loose upon earth. The other savage darted forward, but unfortunately for him he stepped over Shafer's body just as the scout was arising and was thus cast headlong with violence against the

trunk of a tree, at whose foot he lay, quivering and motionless.

"Run for it, Uri," yelled Peter, regaining his knife; "they're too plen'y to fight!" and then without hesitation the two scouts darted forward across the glade.

There seemed but little choice between the different directions, for the cries of the enemy and the crashing sound of their feet as they flocked to a common center, could be heard upon every side. And it seemed as though death—or its equivalent, capture—was inevitable.

But still the scouts had passed through too many dark and dangerous trials to succumb while the faintest gleam of hope remained, and so they dashed on while their bloodthirsty foes continued their cries upon every hand. Despite their intense excitement, their brains were cool and collected.

They knew that the first rush would be toward the spot from whence had sounded the death-shot and yell, and that a half-score seconds would bring them into contact with the foe in front. But were these passed in safety, then a clear field lay before them, and in the darkness, escape was probable.

With this idea, the two scouts paused close behind a huge tree, and awaited the result in breathless suspense, even striving to still their hearts' beating, lest the loud throb should betray their covert to the keen ears of the foe. Scarcely had they paused when the dusky forms of several savages dashed past them, and almost at the same instant a series of wild wailing cries arose from the glade behind them, telling that the corpse of their victim was found.

Knowing that to delay longer would be fatal, the scouts stepped from behind their tree, but just one moment too soon for their own welfare. For a man rushed violently against Parham, the collision hurling them both to the ground. With a fierce gritting oath, Shafer leaped high up into the air, and dashed his heels violently into the chest of the savage.

But the action, quick and adroitly performed as it was, was yet an atom too late, for a loud whoop rung upon the air, and although it was abruptly ended by an explosive snort of agony, the sound was caught up by the other red-skins, and then all was silence save the quick rushing of many feet. As Parham arose, Shafer muttered in a quick tone:

"To the left, man, and run for your life!"

Like two shadowy phantoms the scouts glided off in an abrupt tangent to the left, and although they unavoidably made considerable noise, that of their pursuers overpowered it, and for a time it actually seemed as if they would escape without a race. But then the savages paused as if by mutual consent, eagerly listening for some sound by which to guide their steps.

Noting this, the two scouts also halted, but it was too late. They could hear the rapid tramping of their foes' approach, and knew that now nothing remained for it but a trial of speed through the tangled woods, in which the most expert in woodcraft would be the victor. It was also plain that the enemy were separating and gradually spreading out upon either hand, the more effectually to guard against a like ruse.

"Pete," began Barham, the words jerking out one by one as if the long strides acted as a pump, "this won't do. We must separate. The General must know what we have found out to-night, and now, if one is taken, both will be. You go one way and I'll take the other. Then we have a double chance."

"No, you climb a tree and I'll go both ways. My legs is long gone," snorted Shafer, apparently in sober earnest.

"Bah! if you go—do your darnedest and get there as quick as you can!" and so saying Barham shot off like a bolt, diverging to the right, while Shafer imitated his example, but with lessened bravery, uttering a long, loud shout, thus trying to draw the majority after him.

Urish felt a queer sensation rising in his throat as he noted this new proof of his rude and eccentric, but kind-hearted comrade's consideration, but knowing how important it was that the tidings should reach his General at the earliest moment possible, he pressed onward as fast as was consistent with safety. Owing to the density of the woods and the tangled underbrush, it was impossible to maintain a run without considerable noise, the more so that it was so obscure and gloomy, and Barham knew that some at least of the red-skins were upon his footsteps.

If his mind was not exactly easy, it was not because he feared being outrun or outwinded, but he knew that at any moment an accident might occur that would cast him into the

power of his relentless foes, and once there, he could not doubt the result.

And besides, he was fleeing in almost the opposite direction from that in which he ought to be traveling, and the thought that even if he did succeed in eluding his pursuers, he would be compelled to traverse the same distance again, and that too without pausing for rest, was not the most comforting possible. He had a fair idea of how the ground before him lay, and gradually diverged to the right, intending to strike the river where he hoped to give his enemies the slip, if not before.

Barham maintained his strong, sweeping stride, with a power that seemed little short of marvelous, and by keeping his rifle advanced he contrived to escape any very violent collision with the tree-trunks. His breath came free and regular, and he felt himself a match for the best of his foes.

Of a naturally strong and vigorous constitution, he had passed the greater portion of his life in the forest, as his parents lived upon the frontier. Then he had become well skilled and expert in all sports and exercises that required strength, activity and courage, and now he could maintain a pace for hours, such as would quickly jade a horse.

Thus he sped onward at comparative ease, reserving his strength for a final dash or exertion, in case such should be necessary. He could distinguish the heavy tread of his pursuers at no very great distance behind him, but they now ran in silence so far as yelling was concerned. Evidently they had measured their man and knew that if they proved the victors, every breath would be needed.

Barham knew that there was no hope of their relinquishing the chase, so long as the faintest hope remained, for no doubt they believed him to be the one who had so audaciously entered their village, as well as the one who had killed their comrade in the glade. Several times he seriously deliberated whether or no to try the former ruse and trust to their passing him by, but he feared they would note the abrupt cessation of his footsteps and did not dare make the attempt.

For nearly an hour this deadly silent chase had continued, and apparently his relative position was the same. The savages ran in dogged silence, and Barham knew that they depended upon wearing him out, so that he would fall an easy prey, for

had they exerted themselves to the utmost, he would have been pressed harder.

Then a single long yell sounded from behind the scout, caught up and echoed back by a score of voices stretching upon either hand, and the young ranger felt a fresh alarm as he found that those upon the sides, in advance, were at least even with him, if not ahead. And he knew too that the yell was a signal for the chase to be pressed at utmost speed.

This was the trial he had been expecting, and drawing in a long breath of the cool, bracing air, he dashed ahead with the velocity of a race-horse. A very few minutes, now, would indicate the probable result of this race for life.

In bottom they had been well matched; and now came the test of speed. If his calculations were correct, another half-hour would bring Barham to the bank of the Wabash, although in a direct line one-third of the time would suffice.

And straining every nerve to its utmost tension, Barham sped on, avoiding the tree-trunks and other obstacles as if by instinct. But his calculations were at fault. He had run further than he had thought, and all of a sudden he beheld a lighting up of the space before him, as though at the verge of a wide clearing.

The truth flashed upon his mind, but it was now too late to avert this new danger. Instantly swerving to the left, he struck the rough trunk of a tree with violence and was hurled headlong down into what seemed an immense depth.

The reader knows how exaggerated a little fall seems to one in the dark. An unexpected descent of a foot seems tenfold the distance, and it is wonderful what a cloud of fancies float upon one's mind in such a case. The fraction of a moment seems like an hour of ordinary time.

So it was with Barham. As he fell from the bank it seemed as though he was being hurled down to an unfathomable abyss and the strange, chilling sensation drew a wild cry from his lips. But this was checked as he touched the cold water, with a loud splash, and sunk beneath the surface like a rock.

The bank at this point was in reality over a half-score feet in height, and at its base the water ran swift and deep. Uriah sank to the bottom before he recovered from his momentary stupor, but as he regained the surface and felt the welcome air,

his usual faculties returned in all their vigor. The collision with the tree had merely bruised his shoulder a little; no more, and now he could hear the eager voices of his enemies upon the bank above him.

Although he was ignorant of their dialect, Barham knew that they were puzzled as to what caused his cry; whether it had been merely from surprise, or caused by some sudden and unexpected injury. But he cared not to await the result of their deliberations, and still clutching his rifle in one hand, struck out vigorously but silently down with the rapid current.

Barham had not swam a half-hundred yards when he heard a series of quick, heavy plunges in the water, and knew that his foes had dove in search of his body. Turning upon his back and laying the rifle across his body, the young scout plied his members with all his force and skill, to increase the distance between himself and the unwelcome neighbors.

He could distinguish the sound of others approaching along the bank above, and their voices encouraging those on the river. And he started out from the bank, intending to swim across the river, but desisted, from fear lest the savages should discern his motions, and once more sped down-stream.

The water now appeared warmer and more grateful to his wearied limbs, and he felt an emotion of wild, peculiar joy that almost compelled him to raise his voice in a loud exultant yell of taunting defiance. Suddenly a little eddy caught him and whirled him up against the bank, and with almost instant thought he drew himself out of the water.

A dense mass of damp vines brushed his face, and extending his hands Barham found that there was a small cavity in the bank, evidently washed out by the river at flood water, and hearing the splashings of his enemies rapidly drawing nearer, he stepped within it. But now the folly of his action struck him with all its force.

Suppose the eddy should treat one of the Indians in the same manner, would he not search this snug covert before going further? What more natural than that a tired and hunted fugitive should seek some such refuge? But it was now too late to retreat and take to the water again. Such a course would lead to almost certain discovery, for the savages were now nearly abreast the cavity.

With a gesture of anger, Barnam threw off the muzzle of his rifle, as if he would deal death to the foeman who should discover his retreat. The end of the iron barrel struck against something hard and firm. At the same moment his foot slipped and he fell back against a large root that had been laid bare by the action of the water.

Hope once more was renewed within his heart, and clambering upon the root, the young scout felt above, and to his great joy discovered that within reach the intertwining roots had formed a sort of shelf, amply large to receive his body. There was no time to spend in idle thought, for he could hear the heavy trampling of feet and the sound of voices upon the bank above him, at no great distance, and clutching the roots, Barnam adroitly drew himself up and crouched down against the sandy bank.

The splashings drew nearer, and then a low, guttural exclamation sounded from almost beneath his feet. The savages above paused at this sound, and called out as if in questioning. The voice below him replied.

An Indian had been drawn into the same eddy as he had, and more, had discovered the cavity.

One of those above approached so near the verge in his eagerness, that a portion of the soft earth gave way, and one of his feet fairly brushed the head of the concealed scout, while the dirt covered him from head to foot, a large chunk resting upon his lip. From him the smaller portion of dirt rolled down upon the savage below, who gave vent to his disgust in a sonorous and unmistakable oath.

Then he began cautiously feeling around the cavity, and his hand encountering the root that had served Barnam as a pathway, he shook it violently, bringing down another shower of earth and precipitating an event that bade fair to prove the destruction of the scout. Unfortunately Barnam possessed a sense of more than common sensitiveness, and although he usually considered it a very valuable friend, just now it proved a sad traitor.

The dart that arose from the caving in of the bank, had missed him, and now he felt that he must succumb! In vain did he exert his will in all its force, and even clasped the unruly member desperately with his free hand; all was of no avail.

But as we have said, the sudden shaking of the mass of roots accelerated the catastrophe, raising a second cloud of dust.

Barham, feeling insecure upon his shelf, had released the member to grasp a root, when the second attack proved fatal. Loud and like a clarion note two clear and sonorous sneezes sounded upon the night-air, greeted with a yell of di-may by the savage below, and a cry of surprise from those above.

Acting without thought, Barham arose to a sitting posture and by this movement cast the heavy lumps of earth down into the water. The loud splash, united with the sneeze, deceived the savage, and with a loud cry of exultation he leaped into the river after his supposed foe, calling to announce his good fortune to his comrades, and before he recovered from his surprise, Barham realized that he was saved! at least, for the present.

But fearing lest he should discover the unintended ruse, Barham silently rose up, and crept over the edge of the bank, passing within a half-score feet of the red-men whose every attention was drawn toward the water, and glided quickly away into the forest. He could still hear the yells of the savages, but he knew that they had not discovered him, and pursued his way, chuckling silently to himself at his almost miraculous escape.

His present course led almost directly toward the Preble's town, and knowing that the woods were by no means free from danger, Uriah resolved to again strike the river, and crossing it, then make the best of his way back to the army. After proceeding several miles at a rapid pace, he approached the river, and sliding down the bank, that was low at this point, he entered the water, and swimming upon his back, the better to support his rifle, struck out boldly for the opposite shore, feeling confident that his enemies were all above him.

Suddenly he struck against some hard object, and abruptly diving, came up at a little distance, the better to reconnoiter, fearing it was the canoe of an enemy. Instead, he saw a grub-sized tree together with considerable brushwood, and then as he turned to resume his course, a loud, clear crack rung out from the woods before him. Whether the shot was discharged at him, or not, Uriah didn't consider it prudent to proceed, and swam quickly back to the log, supporting himself by one

hand, and floated down with the current, only holding his head above the water, as the cold night-wind struck chillingly against the saturated habiliments when exposed. And thus he proceeded for over a mile, when his attention was suddenly attracted by a slight splash in the water, to his right.

Instinctively he sunk still deeper into the water, and turned his head in that direction, although fancying the noise produced by the playful leap of a fish. But his well-trained eye, aided by his low position, soon enabled him to make out the faint outlines of a canoe, containing several men, but whether white or red he could not know, coming directly toward him.

These, he did not doubt, were a portion of the party who had given him such a long chase, and who had descended the river, further than he had calculated, to watch for their foe. Most likely they had seen the driftwood, and suspecting that the white man would resort to some such conveyance, were advancing to reconnoiter.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE RIVER.

MEANWHILE, Peter Shasler had not been idle. When he separated from his brother scout, he gave, as we have noticed, a loud yell of taunting defiance, as much from a natural recklessness as a desire to draw the main body after himself.

He was a devout believer in "luck," and once having his fortune told by a reputed old witch, who predicted that he would die of old age in his bed, he firmly believed that his life was invulnerable, and a few narrow escapes still further confirmed this idea. Taken all in all he was a strange mixture of sense and nonsense, of rashness and caution; but generous, brave and devoted to those whom he called his friends.

Then, as stated, he darted away at breakneck speed, plying his long slender legs with ungraceful motions, but which served to carry him clear of the bushes and obstructions in a

truly wonderful manner. Usually proud of his speed and willing for a race, Pete was now strangely loth to leave his safety to that test, and strove to increase the distance that divided him and his foes, the better to put into execution a little plan of his own.

Before long he had gained the required distance, and slung the rifle over his shoulder by its strap, so as to leave his arms free and unencumbered. Then as the low limbs of a huge tree brushed his head, Shasfer grasped one of the pendient boughs and adroitly drew himself up and lay along the limb, chuckling inaudibly at how easily he would fool his pursuers.

In another moment the foremost Indian came rushing along, hot upon the trail. But Pete had miscalculated one essential thing. His weight had bent the supple bough so much that the neck of the savage struck violently upon it, while his forehead coming in contact with the ribs of the scout, caused that worthy to utter a sudden grunt, at the same time knocking him from his perch, while the unfortunate savage fell senseless with almost a dislocated neck.

Like a cat, Shasfer alighted upon his feet, and without an instant's pause, bounded away as before, only diverging toward the right, just in time to escape a collision with the remaining savages, who had come up during the momentary pause. One of them discovered the body of their comrade, and believing that he was dead, and of course the work of the fugitive, paused to utter their yell of vengeance and to search the spot, little thinking that their uproar served to deaden the sound of Shasfer's footsteps, until it was too late.

Not knowing but the Indians were still upon his track, the long-legged scout continued his headlong race for over a mile, and then his pace slackened. The violent blow he had received in his side now began to pain him excessively, augmented by his strenuous exertions, and once more did he take to the low hanging branches of a tree, this time not pausing until he was at a safe height from the ground.

With a rashness that his experience should have prevented, Pete coolly filled a short, black pipe, and igniting it beneath the cover of his hat, he replaced its cover and began smoking with great gusto. And then feeling at ease and relying

upon his "luck," the scout began to soliloquize in a low tone, as was his frequent practice when alone.

"Wonder how that blamed old red nigger feels? Ought to 'a' known better'n to run ag'inst me. Dad's old bull—awful big he was, an' horns—oh Lord! talk about horns, he had 'em! They beat tail 'em, I mean, wasn't it? Yes, that's the way, for I 'member cuttin' it off for a whip. Made a mighty nice whip, too, it did; and not so nice, neither, when the old man found it out. Had to buy me a new shirt after that, he did. But it served him right, mought 'a' made me tuck it off first, afore he tried my whip!

"But the bull—he tried to butt me onc't, I s'pose 'cause I'd spilt his fly-brush, but he got the wust on it, knocked his right horn plum off! Fact—no, durned if it is! Pete, you're at your old tricks—lyin' ag'in, 'cause dad didn't have no bull, and the one he did have didn't have no horns, 'cause it was a milky cow. Well, nobdy learn me, so I don't keer. But I can't quit that blamed habit, er— Thunder! I'd clean forgot that Uri!

"Wonlet ef he's safe? Be jest like the consarned seller to go an' get caught and sizzled over a slow fire, by them pesky red critters, ef only to make me mad. If he does go an' get killed, blamed ef I don't whale the very life out o' him when I catch him! Like I did that— Hold on! that comes another scroulger! Pete Shasfer, you'd better be travellin', ef only to keep your consarned mouth shut!" and muttering disconsolately the scout quickly descended from the tree and struck out through the woods, in a direct course for the river, as near as he could calculate.

In his anxiety concerning the probable fate of his brother scout, Shasfer entirely forgot the mission that had been intrusted to him, and even had not this been the case, it is not likely that he would have hesitated long. In his peculiar rough way he sincerely loved Bartham, almost idolized him, in fact, and this friendship dated back to a distant occasion when Uriah had preserved him from almost certain death, but which occurrence does not particularly concern our story. It seemed to Shasfer that his friend was in imminent danger in which his hand would be needed, although in just what way he could not have told. He invariably acted upon his "senses," with-

out pausing to analyze them, and this was an instance. That his present route was the most dangerous, probably, that he could have taken did not influence him in the least.

Favored by the formation of the river, Shafer reached its bank some little time before Barham did, and then paused to deliberate, undecided upon the course best for him to pursue. Wishing to assist his comrade, Pete yet knew not how this could be done, and began to believe that he had acted foolishly in not making the best of his way toward the army, instead of thus searching for a man who might well be half a dozen miles away, in either direction.

But he was not suffered to remain long in doubt, and his future course was decided for him by an incident that occurred at this juncture. Shafer was standing upon the high bank of the river, leaning upon the muzzle of his rifle and gazing vacantly out upon the water, deeply buried in his meditations.

Mechanically his keen eye discovered and rested idly upon a faint shadow that appeared to be quite rapidly approaching him, as its outlines gradually grew more and more distinct. And then he started and sunk noiselessly down to the ground, while every faculty seemed fully aroused and upon the alert. He saw that it was a canoe, and that its occupant was steering it toward a point a few yards below where he stood.

With a step as light and agile as that of a creeping panther, Shafer glided along the river-bank, keeping a close watch upon the canoe, and calculating the exact point where it would land. He looked upon the boat as a certain trophy, and feeling slightly jaded, the scout resolved to make the remainder of his journey down the river by its aid.

The boat landed upon a sort of shelving point, and was drawn carefully from the water and pushed up the slope before its owner, who apparently did not intend using it again that night. Shafer had selected his position where he knew the savage must pass, it being the only point where ascent of the bank was practicable, and when the prow of the canoe was shoved over the verge of the bank, it almost touched his body.

Pete, with his propensity for joking unquelled, extended one

hand and bore back heavily upon the canoe, thus neutralizing and rendering the strenuous efforts of the man below futile. Shafer chuckled heartily, though inaudibly, as he heard his enemy pant and curse, and more than once the red-man fell at full length as his foot slipped upon the moist clay.

In vain did the boatman shift his position and turn the prow of the canoe, evidently thinking it was against a stump or a tree; the scout still baffled his efforts. But then remembering that he was losing precious moments very foolishly, Pete changed his tactics, and as he felt the other pushing furiously, he grasped the prow with both hands, and giving a powerful jerk, drew it clear up beside him.

Shafer heard a stifled grunt of disgust as the savage slipped again, followed by a heavy splash as he rolled down the descent into the water. Peering over the escarpment, Pete could scarcely refrain from laughing aloud at the ludicrous misadventure of the red-man, who breathed audible curses as he emerged from his involuntary bath and began to ascend the bank.

But Pete's feelings suddenly changed and a deep scowl of hate overspread the visage of the scout, as he grasped his heavy knife more firmly. The Indian, little dreaming of the fate that awaited him, nimbly scrambled up the acclivity and drew himself over the escarpment upon all fours.

Ere he could arise, the dark lump that was touching him, and which he no doubt fancied was the stump against which the canoe had struck, suddenly sprung into life and assumed the form of a man. The red-man only gave one slight grunt of wonder, and then the deadly weapon descended, driven by a strong arm nerved with intense hatred, the point piercing the back of his neck and fairly pinning him to the ground.

There was a peculiar look of vindictive joy upon the slayer's features as he arose and placing one foot upon the dead body, withdrew the weapon with an effort. Then the scout removed the weapons and ammunition from the corpse and placed them beside the rifle in the canoe, after which he carefully drew the boat down into the water.

Entirely, Shafer paused for a moment to deliberate, and then, plying the paddle with a strong and well-skilled hand, shot swiftly out toward the opposite shore. He knew that it

would be the safest side, and intended to paddle down the river, keeping in the deeper shadows along the shore.

Scarcely had he left the shore when he heard the faint sound of yelling apparently at some considerable distance up the river. Believing that this, in some way, was connected with the fortunes of his friend, Shafer turned the canoe's prow up-stream, and by plying the paddles diligently, contrived to hold his own against the strong current.

The sounds told him that unless Barham had been captured he had taken to the water to avoid his enemies, and knowing his skill as a swimmer, Pete looked upon his escape as assured, in the latter case. He maintained his present position for some time, hoping that Uriah would meet him, when they could proceed together.

But the silence continued for so long that he thought all was over, in one way or the other, and knowing that he could be quite plainly discovered from the shore, Shafer once more turned his face toward the further bank. Again he heard yells, in almost the same position, and again he paused, with considerable anxiety and alarm. Alarm, not for himself, but for the fate of his brave comrade.

He made a stroke or two with the intention of going up to the spot, but knowing how foolish such a course would be, retained his position, listening anxiously. But even his steel-like muscles began to tire, and with a heavy sigh Pete turned toward the shore, paddling listlessly, for he believed that his bosom friend was either killed or a prisoner in the hands of their deadly, relentless enemy.

Reaching the denser shadows, the scout allowed his boat to float idly down with the current, while he was lost to all the perils of his situation, in a deep and painful reverie. He was thinking of Barham and the many happy times they had passed through together; and then his thoughts reverted to the home that would be filled with sorrow and gloom at his heavy tidings.

And he sighed, too, as he thought of one—a dainty, fair-haired, blue-eyed maiden, who called Uriah brother, and who took so much delight in tormenting and tantalizing the lank, ungainly scout. He sighed, because a certain dream—of a cosy little home, a little wife, and, perchance, some little

children who would learn to call him *father*—now appeared fainter and further off than ever, for now it seemed as though he had acted criminally in separating from the brother.

Suddenly he heard a sharp, whip-like crack ring out from the gloomy shore, and a ragged bullet hummed unpleasantly near to his person. Recalled to the world of realization, Shafer paddled swiftly away from the shore and then paused with a deep curse, checking his boat with a powerful sweep of the paddle.

Before and somewhat below he could just distinguish the faint outlines of what seemed a large canoe, and Shafer thought he was surrounded by foes. Not knowing how many he would have to encounter upon the land, or their whereabouts, Pete resolved to await the action of those upon the water, feeling assured that, if necessary, he could easily give them the slip and gain the shore in safety.

So delaying the progress of the boat, the scout kept his eyes fixed upon the faint outline, that grew more indistinct, as if receding, instead of advancing. For some time he watched the suspicious object, until, at length convinced that it was nothing but a floating drift, he paddled noiselessly toward it, displaying that disregard of danger that was one of his peculiarities, blended with caution.

As the reader has already divined, it was none other than the floating tree that Barham had sought as a refuge, when diverted from his purpose by the shot discharged at Shafer, and we will now revert to him.

The young scout was submerged in the water with the exception of his head, and even this was concealed in the shade by the tall side of the log. From this position he watched the movements of the canoe, hoping that did it contain Indians he would be able to escape observation in the obscurity.

Then he remembered that his rifle was lying upon the top of the log, and knew that the gleaming of its silver mountings could scarcely fail to attract the attention of his enemies. But it was now too late to remedy this unless at the risk of attracting the attention of the intruders, and he awaited the result in painful suspense.

The drift pile was higher in the center, and by this means so noiselessly did they approach, the occupants of the two

canoes were sublimely ignorant of the presence of the other, and Barham's entire attention being directed toward the larger boat, little dreamed that his friend was so close at hand and running blindly upon what seemed certain destruction.

The position was this. In the center, slowly floating downstream, was the mass of driftwood that concealed Barham. Upon the right hand and a little below was the canoe containing the savages, two of them wielding the paddles, while the other kneeled in the middle of the boat, grasping a rifle. Upon the left hand, and a little above, was the canoe containing the form of Peter Shaefer, who, upon approaching so near, and knowing that the impetus given his boat would suffice to bring it alongside, had relinquished the paddle and taken up his rifle instead, more from instinct than aught else, for nothing was further from his mind than what was about to occur so soon.

The larger canoe had drawn within a length of the log, where Barham was concealed, and the oarsmen had ceased their exertions, and were curiously eying the floating mass, when they suddenly uttered a cry of alarm, mingled with joy, that was echoed back from close behind Uriah, who distinguished the unmistakable tones of Peter Shaefer. Thinking only of his friend's welfare, Barham called aloud in anxious tones:

"Run for it, Pete—run for your life!"

"Uri!" was all that Shaefer replied just then, as he recognized the head and shoulders of his friend, and then as with one impulse there came a double discharge, one from each canoe, although sounding but as one report.

The Indian marksman had fired at Pete, who had returned the compliment, and Barham uttered a cry of rage as he bade his friend fall at full length to the bottom of the canoe. He forgot himself then, and renewing the cry, he left the cover of the log and sprung through the water at the boat of the enemy. Shaefer's shot had evidently been fatal, for the marksman had fallen backward into the arms of the savage sitting in the stern, thus hampering his movements to a fatal degree.

The one impulse brought the young scout against the canoe, and, exerting his strength, he tumbled the frail craft over like an egg-shell, and the next moment felt himself desperately

clasped in the embrace of one of his foes. Fortunately his right arm was free, and as they sunk beneath the water in their struggles, he plunged his knife to the hilt in the side of his antagonist.

At almost the same instant he felt a sharp twinge in his left breast like the touch of a red-hot iron, and he knew that he was wounded. The strong arms still clasped him desperately, and the scout's brain began to throb violently, but then drawing up his feet and bracing them against the body of his foe, with a powerful kick he managed to free himself from the incumbrance, and rose to the surface of the water.

As he shook back the streaming hair from his eyes, Barkham glanced quickly around him, still clasping the faithful knife ready for instant use, if necessary, but he only beheld one man, and that one in a canoe. A second glance told him that it was none other than Peter Shafer, and striking out toward the boat, the young scout called him by name.

"Is that you, 'Riah?" came the eager response. "Sure you ain't a red-skin? No foolishin', now!"

"Let me in, Shafer; I'm almost worn out, and nearly frozen, besides," somewhat impatiently replied Barkham, reaching the canoe. "But where are the others?"

"I shot one, you grappled another, but darned if I know whar the other one went to. I know he didn't come up atop ag'in, so I reckon he got drowned," said Pete, assisting his friend into the boat with him. "Whar's your rifle, and how did you come out here?"

"I left it on the log yonder; pull up so I can get it, and I will explain as I clean it out. I took a sudden jump into the river without stopping to unload it, and I guess it's a little damp."

The rifle was found where it had been left, and then ensued a hasty explanation while Barkham drew the bullet and wiped out his weapon. Meanwhile they were floating idly down the stream with the drift, not caring to return upon the land, as they so lately had received proof of the vigilance of their enemies. In the exchange of shots Shafer had not been injured beyond a slight "crash," owing to his sudden fall, and upon examination Barkham's wound proved to be merely a slight cut just through the skin, although several inches in length, and cut that bled freely.

Suddenly Pete uttered a cry of wondering rage, and sprung to his feet, almost overturning the boat in so doing. Before Barham could speak, to ask the cause, it became sufficiently pl. in; *the canoe was two-thirds full of water!*

Uriah was already soaking wet, and in the gloom beside the log, Shafter had not noticed the fact until the cold element... I saturated his leggings and reached the sensitive skin. And as he sprung up, one foot sank clear through the frail bark, and then with a sullen rush the boat filled and sunk beneath them throwing them both into the water.

The two scouts quickly gained the log and secured their rifles from the water, after which they stared at each other in blank dismay. Dark as it was, they were sufficiently close together to note the expression upon the other's face, and saw that the same suspicion had occurred to them both.

They knew that the canoe had not sunk of its own accord, but that it was the work of a cunning and desperate enemy; that it had been scuttled by a knife. And where was that knife and its owner now? How long would it be before one or both would be made to feel its temper?

They were both brave men, and yet, a brief thrill of dread crept over their frames as they clung to the log. Then as if ashamed of his momentary hesitation, Pete whispered to his comrade:

"Did you finish that one?"

"Yes, I am sure of it."

"And I fixed one more, so there can be but one, anyhow. Shall we hunt 'im out, or make for shore?"

"Turn tail on one red? never! That would be a nice story to get out about us, wouldn't it? If he is here we will find him soon, and if he is gone, why so much the better for him. You take one side of the drift, and I'll go this. Look close and we must surely find him," muttered Barham as he drew his knife.

The rifles were left upon the log, and a careful search instituted, but without success. If concealed ~~among~~ ^{about} the drift it was so neatly done that the scouts could not detect the hiding-place of their foe; but it was probable that he had fled at once after disabling the canoe. In fact he had feared to attempt fleeing while the canoe was sound, lest he should be

discovered and overtaken, and so had scuttled the boat, fearing to tackle the two scouts.

This was the conclusion that the whites arrived at, and they once more sought the butt of the log to rest from their arduous exertions. They did not venture forth from the water, although their position was far from being comfortable, as they knew not how many of their foes might be near, and that they were keenly upon the alert, the past events fully demonstrated.

"Uri," finally said Shafer, as if the idea had just struck him, "that last Injun wasn't a fool!"

"Well, what of that?" somewhat hastily replied Barham, not feeling in the mood to appreciate the oracular remarks of Peter.

"Well then, won't he think that we'll keep on down-stream with the float, and if he meets any of his friends, won't we be likely to have more visitors than we kin entertain?"

"You're right, Peter, and so I say let's make for the land. But which side; the right or the left one?"

"I guess the left's the right one, this time," and without more ado the scouts left the drifting heap and struck out vigorously toward the left bank of the river.

CHAPTER V.

A BLACK DEED FOILED.

A FEW minutes sufficed for two such skillful swimmers as were the scouts, to reach the land, and then once more they prised to put their firearms into serviceable condition; although submerged but for a moment by the sinking of the canoe, they might have been sufficiently dampened to hang fire, and that might be fatal.

"Pete," said Barham, in a careless tone as they worked, "how did you manage to get that canoe? You forgot to tell me."

"Made it."

"Bah! talk sense, if you know how."

"Ned, it 'mounts to jest the same, anyhow; I had it made for me. You see I was comin' to hunt you up, and saw a red-skin paddlin' down-stream all alone, so I called to him to come and ferry me over and I'd give him sixpence."

"Now you're lying, Pete; what's the use?"

"Best mind what you say, 'Riah Barham; 'tain't healthy to talk that a-way *all* the time. I turned a seller's hull face cl'ar 'round on the back of his neck 'cause he told me that, and he was a heap bigger'n you be, too. You'd look purty in *that* fix, now wouldn't you? Then don't 'cuse me o' lyin'," muttered Shafer, shaking his head with a solemn leer upon his lank visage.

"I thought I knew the boat when I first saw it, and now I'm sure. It was the one we saw that old black s'paw in last week—the one that you took such a shine to, Pete—Indian Ned's grandmother, isn't she?"

"Yes, and she said that onlest you paid her more 'tention she'd let you slide and marry some one else. I tell her you wanted to borrow the boat, and she let me have it."

"But honest, Pete, how did you get it? I want to know," laughed Uriah.

"Well then, talk *sense*. You see I was watchin' the river when I saw the boat a-comin' over, filled plum-full o' Indians, and I slipped down to whar they must land, and then as they stepped out, I just hauled off and lent 'em one, one after the other, tell nine of 'em went under, and that was only one left. He begged so purty that I told him he might paddle me over the river ef he'd behave himself. He did, that is, as far as I wanted to go, and then I told him to jump out and swim the rest o' the way. But he couldn't swim, so I put one end o' the ramrod in his gun and told him to straddle t'other end, and hold on fur dear life. Then I tretched the durned thing off, and the last I see'd o' him he was ridin' that 'ere decorated ramrod cl'ar over the tops o' the trees, and ef he hadn't stopped, I reckon he's most thar by this time."

"Where?"

"To the happy huntin'-grounds. Come, let's travel," and giving over the vain attempt to get a straight story from Pete, Barham trudged on in the footsteps of his comrade.

They only went a short distance from the bank of the river

and then turned their faces down-stream, walking briskly to make up for lost time, as well as to restore warmth to their chilled and benumbed limbs. They did not renew their conversation, and turned all their attention to proceeding rapidly and silently.

Although they kept doggedly onward, their steps were heavy and unelastic, far unlike their usual lithe, springy tread. The long chase, the cold bath, and exertion of swimming so far, had jaded them far more than they imagined, until after a mile's walk, and only then that they realized how important were the tinders that they had gained at the village, the scouts would have encamped for the night, reckless of what danger might surround them. As it was, after another mile Barham suddenly paused and exclaimed:

"Pete, I've a good mind to knock off for the night; I'm just about wore out."

"Sho! ain't tired, be ye? 'Pears like I could walk to Vincennes, to night, yit," complacently rejoined Shafer, as he spratted down with a grunt of satisfaction.

"I hope you'll choke some of these days, on those lies of yours, Pete," pettishly exclaimed Uriah. "I know I can stand as much as you, any day, and I admit that I am about pegged out."

"Lay down then and I'll kin ler take a walk around, jest to git a appetite for sleep like. I'd kick all the river off, ef I turned in now."

"Then you'll stop here until day?"

"Ef you say so; bless ye, I ain't tired, not at all! Lay down; I'll be back in a minnit," and the lank form of the scout glided away in the darkness.

Barham knew that he was only performing a customary precaution of his, and that Shafer was only too glad of a chance to repose his tired limbs, and so he lay down at the foot of a tree, and closing his eyes, awaited the return of Pete. But despite himself, his eyes closed tighter and his head dropped forward, and he was asleep almost ere he had composed his limbs.

His slumber was of short duration, however, for in a few moments he was roused by the touch of his comrade's hand, and a finger was placed warningly upon his lips. In an instant he

was fully aroused and eager to learn what discovery had caused this proceeding upon Pete's part.

"What is it, Shafer—Indians?"

"Wuss'n that, a heap! I've found a gal!"

"A girl! what do you mean?"

"Looks like one, anyhow, but mebbe it's a sperret. She's purty enough, anyhow. But does sperrets snore? 'cause if they don't, then she ain't one!"

"Look here, Pete Shafer, can't you tell me what you mean, without so much confounded nonsense? I declare you get worse every hour of your life!" exclaimed Barham, exasperatedly. "I'll have a nice story to tell Lucy when I get home, won't I?"

"It's a white gal, in a log shanty, back a leetle from the river, cluss under the hill yonder," hastily explained Pete, as if alarmed at the words of his comrade.

"A white girl, and here? I didn't know that any one lived in these parts except Indians. Are you sure she's white?"

"White as my hat. Come and see for yourself, if you don't b'lieve me," and Shafer led the way to a small log house, through whose window flickered a faint light.

Cautiously creeping up to this diminutive observatory, Barham gazed upon the scene that lay before his eyes with a wondering stare. Beside the fireplace, upon a rude chair, there sat, or rather reclined, the form of a young woman, with head bent over upon her shoulder, and the dying embers in the great fireplace cast a faint ruddy light over her form and features.

The young scout's wonder increased as he noted the superbly-rounded form and the regular features that seemed to him the most beautiful that had ever met his gaze, now lighted up with a calm, peaceful smile.

As he gazed, a cold sweat broke out upon his face and his limbs trembled strangely beneath him until he was forced to lean against the house for support. He did not try to define the sensation, and stood with eyes eagerly drinking in the picture, unheeding the whisper of Shafer, who then rudely shook him by the shoulder.

"What is it?" he muttered, with a vague look at his companion.

"Don't you know? There's somebody a-comin' up from the river! Be ye gone plum crazy?"

"I believe I have— Ha! you're right, Peter, there is somebody coming," and now fully aroused, the young scout followed his companion, who turned and glided silently around the corner of the house into the denser shadows, where they crouched down, listening intently.

They could now quite plainly distinguish the heavy tread of a man approaching from the river side, and were confident that it was a white man, for, whether in peace or war time, an Indian would never plant his foot so heavily. But was he friend or foe? that was the main question. Most likely it was the owner of the lone cabin; the father, or—and as this idea struck him, Barham experienced a strange sensation that mystified himself—mayhap the husband of the queenly woman whom they had just been observing.

The man quickly drew nearer, and the two scouts, warily peering around the corner, saw that he was indeed White, and then he paused by the window, peering in as they had done before them. Uttering a grunt as of disapproval, he then knocked loudly at the door, arousing the girl from her slumbers.

"Who is there?" she called out, and Barham felt another thrill as he heard the clear, musical tones.

"Me—your father," replied the man, who was, as the reader is aware, Seba Ambold. "Make haste, Fan, and open the door. I'm cold and hungry as a wolf," he added, impatiently.

Then the door was opened to admit his form, and again closed. Shafter glanced quizzically at Barham, and muttered:

"Darned polite, he is, I guess not! Don't ax a seller eretter in, nor ef he's hungry nor nothin'. Let's turn the shanty over and roll it into the river! Shell I?"

"He didn't know we were here, Pete, or he'd have asked us in, I don't doubt. How is it? Shall we knock or go on further?"

"Nary a fur'ler do I go, this night. You kin, ef you like, let I'm a-goin' inside thar. Not that I'm bit hungry or tired; Lord! no, but then it'll kinder plague him. I know he's awful stangy; I could smell it stickin' out all over him, and I don't like that pritty well. But then thar's that gal. I know she'll

be gawpin' at a feller all the time, and I don't like that. To see I ain't bashful nor nothin', not a mite, but then my clothes is tored badly, and she'll see it."

"You can stand behind me, Pete," laughed Barham. "I'm going in," and he walked around to the heavy slab door and rapped smartly.

The noise of footsteps and voices ceased instantly within the house, and then the heavy wooden shutter was slammed quickly to as if in alarm. A hoarse voice then called out:

"Who are you and what do you want at this time o' night?"

"We are white men, like yourself, and friends who—" began Barham in reply.

"Who're awful hungry and a heap tired!" called out Shafer, concluding the sentence.

"How should I know that you are friends? your voices are strange to me," added Ambold, somewhat anxiously, as the scouts thought.

"Had we been enemies, our greeting would have come through the window, yonder, instead of this way. We could have shot you both and you'd have been none the wiser. But if you doubt, we can go our way. It will not be the first time that we have slept in the woods."

"Father," said Fanny, in a low tone that was yet distinctly audible to the keen ears of the scouts, "he does not speak like a bad man. I'm sure he's honest."

After some little hesitation the heavy door was swung open and the sturdy form of the frontiersman was revealed with ready rifle in his hand, and the figure of Fanny close behind him.

"Come in then," said Ambold, but yet with what seemed like reluctance, "you are welcome to what we can give you so long as you are what you appear. But I warn you that I am a child, and more accustomed to bandy hard blows than fine words."

"How-de-do, mister man?" said Shafer, pushing in ahead of Barham. "Hope I see ye—how's the family? all well, eh? So 'm I. Same to you, mam," turning to Fanny. "Would ax you to shake hands, but mine ain't overly clean. Forget to wash this mornin'—was in too big a hurry. Golly! don't a fire feel good? Come in, 'Riah, don't be bashful. Ah, you be in, eh?"

Barham greeted the two no less cordially, but with a little more politeness, and then advanced toward the fire, laying aside his rifle and hat with the freedom of backwoods life. Accepting the stool that was offered him by the maiden, with a pleasant smile, he cast a curious glance around the room.

"Lord! I clean forgot!" exclaimed Shafer, springing up from the chair he had appropriated. "Stranger—and you, likewise, also, m'm, 'low me to make you acquainted with my friend, Uriah Barham, Es-quire—that's *him*," nodding toward his comrade, who also arose, "and Pete Shafer, commonly called Ly—no, I don't mean that—Shafer, that's all; which is *me*."

"Thank you, and to be as candid, my name is Seba Ambold, and this is my daughter Fanny," replied the host, gazing keenly at the two men with a peculiar intentness. "But I believe you said you were hungry—I have not had supper yet, being belated in the woods, and you can join me, if you will."

"Lord! I ain't hungry," declared Pete, earnestly, "it's *him*. He's the queerest critter you ever did see in all your bormed days; eat'n all the univarsal time. Pears like he cain't git outside of enough to satisfy him. Wants three meals a day, regular. Now me—if I git a good square meal onc't a week, it does me; and that makes me think. It's jest a week since I et, ain't it, Uri? or is it a day over—which?" anxiously inquired Shafer.

"Come—come, Pete, don't begin this early," laughed Barham, with a slight flush. "You'll give Miss Fanny a queer opinion of us both if you keep on."

Fanny had set about getting some food, when she whispered to her father, who arose and spoke to the young scout.

"I see you are wounded, my friend—had you not better let me bind it up for you?"

"Oh, it's only a scratch—that's all, I assure you," said Uriah, replacing his tunic that had revealed the cut garments.

"T ain't nothin', square. A feller just run a corn knife through him—that's all. Bless ye, he don't mind them things a mite," declared Shafer, kicking his comrade up on the shin and winking frightfully.

"Surely you haven't had any trouble with the Indians, have you, sir?" asked Ambold, with a suspicious look at his guests.

"I will be frank with you, Mr. Ambold," replied Barham, totally disregarding the signals of Peter, and speaking earnestly, "because I fear you are not aware of the danger you run, out here so far from any assistance of your own kind. Can it be you do not know that another war is at hand, if not already begun?"

"Another war?" echoed the host, uneasily.

"Yes. The treaties between the whites and Indians have been broken, and an army under General Harrison is marching upon the Prophet's town. The red-skins pretend peace, but my friend and I have seen and heard enough to-night, to—Thunder! Pete, you hurt?" cried Barham, bending down and rubbing his shin that had received an unusually forcible kick from Shafer.

"Then it was you that shot—I mean—what did you learn?" confusedly said Ambold, shifting his position uneasily.

The young man hastily, but clearly detailed what had occurred that night, adding:

"If not for your own sake, then for that of your daughter, you should accept the warning and leave here for a place of safety. A day—an hour, maybe—may be too late. Their blood is up and they will stop at nothing."

"I do not believe that—I mean that I don't think they would trouble me, even admitting that what you say is true. I have had dealings with the red-men for a long time, and always treated them well, as they have me. Besides, Elkwater and several of the chiefs are my friends. No, although I thank you kindly for your interest, I will stay where I am," firmly replied Ambold.

For some time the conversation continued, and was only dropped when the substantial meal—supper it could not be called, for it was now long past midnight—appeared, and despite Shafer's renewed declaration of not being in the least hungry, he mansfully held his own, as did the other two. Fanny, in obedience to a hint from her father, now withdrew, after bringing a quantity of furs and robes from an inner room, and Ambold told their guests to retire wherever they felt so disposed.

Shafer appeared considerably uneasy, and glanced around, glancing covertly at Barham, who was too wearied, however,

to notice his sly signs. And at last Pete broke out with:

"Most ready to travel, 'Rish?"

"To—what?" exclaimed Barham, in amazement.

"No I don't mean that; I say to *travel*. You know we've a good bit to go yet, and it's so late now that that's no use o' thinkin' o' sleep. Besides, I ain't a mite sleepy."

"Well, I am, and I don't stir a peg from here before day light, say what you will. I've had my fill of tramping to-night, so if you're bound to go, strike out; but you'll have to go alone. What's got into you, anyhow, Pete?"

"Nothin', unless it's supper. Then you won't go?"

Barham's only answer was to select a large bear-skin and spread it out before the fire. Shafer, seeing that his comrade was fully resolved, followed his example, and soon the snores of the two scouts were mingling together most harmoniously, while Seba Ambold sat calmly smoking his pipe, with an occasional sidelong glance at his guests.

Then laying aside the pipe, the frontiersman called first to one and then the other, by their names, in a low tone. Neither stirred or gave any indications of having heard him, and then stepping upon tiptoe, Ambold secured his cap and rifle and then with one more dubious glance at the recumbent forms, unbarred the door, lifted the woollen latch and emerged from the cabin.

Scarcely had he vanished when the lank form of Peter Shafer silently arose, and crouching beside the door, listened intently for some moments. Then as if satisfied he opened it sufficiently for his thin body to peer through, and stood motionless upon the doorstep.

The night had cleared up, and although there was no moon, the rays of the stars showed him the form of the borderer proceeding rapidly down toward the river-bank. Like a shadow Shafer glided after him, and saw Ambold step into a canoe and paddle swiftly out upon the river.

The long rifle of the scout rose to his cheek as if instinctively, and his eye glanced through the sights, and rested upon the dark form of the traitor—as he felt no doubt now but such Ambold was—but then with a muttered sentence he lowered the weapon and watched until the canoe passed beyond the range of his vision.

"No, I would a done it, only for *her*; but I don't believe she knows what he's after. The cussed sarpint! to break bread with a feller and then go sell him to the reds!" mused Shafer, as he turned toward the house.

In a few moments he was bending over Barham, who, true to his schooling, awoke at the first touch with his wits in full play. In reply to his whispered query, Shafer told him what he had seen, and then, after hesitating for a bit, the two scouts emerged from the house. But there Uriah paused.

"Now, Shafer, out with it. Tell me what you mean, an' be quick, too. And if it's only some of your non-sense, look out, for, true as you live, I'll lend you one that will knock all such deviltry out of your head for a week to come!"

"Ef you'd rather stay in thar and git your head barbered in reg'lar Injun style, why go ahead; I don't keer a ~~cuss~~!" growled Shafer.

"Pete, what do you mean?"

"Jest this; and ef you hadn't 'a' been sech a dumb fool, thar'd 'a' been nothin' o' this; but you couldn't take a hint, though I a'most broke your shins. I knowed, soon as I set eyes on that feller, that I'd seen him afore, but couldn't place him, fer the life o' me. Then when you told 'bout bein' at the Injun town, and he axed was it you who shot—I knowed him right away. He was thar with the red-skins, 'cause I noticed him, jest before t'other one was shot."

"Are you sure? I didn't notice him," said Barham, dubiously.

"I did, and so I wanted you to come out then, for I mistrusted he'd be up to some deviltry. He called to me 'n' you when we was asleep—as *he* thought—and then left. I foltered him and see him take a straight shoot for the village, in a canoe."

"Do you think *she* knows any thing about it?" anxiously queried the other.

"No; 'cause why. If she did, he'd 'a' had her shot the door, and ef we woke up, tell us he was in one o' t'other rooms. Don't ye see? But come—do you want to go back and have your nap out?"

For reply Barham struck off down the river at a rapid pace, his brain filled with conflicting thoughts, but all of a painful

nature. We do not contemplate following them further, at present, only premising that they reached the army in safety and delivered their report to General Harrison.

As every one knows, the battle of Tippecanoe was fought upon the 7th day of November, 1811, ending in a disastrous defeat of the allied red-men, crushing forever the power of the "Prophet," El-skwatawa. But we will not inflict upon the reader a description of the fight, that has so often been told for yet of the deeds that our two scouts performed, although they were thrilling enough. Although they fought well, it was no more than did their hundreds of comrades, and does not concern our tale.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MANIAC RANGER ON THE TRAIL.

Sgt. Ambold had good grounds for not fearing the enmity of the savages, although they were not altogether the views given by Liza to Barham. Besides being a friend of the Prophet, and others, he was—as we have seen—the warm friend of Paul Gisborne, who was in reality an emissary of the British, who had been sent to incite the red-men to another war, the better to further the plans of England. More than might else it was his doings that precipitated the battle of Tippecanoe, against the direct counsel of Tecumseh, who was not present at the time.

An Englishman himself, Ambold sympathized with the savages, although he had not taken an active part thus far, and knowing of what vital importance it was to them that the news gleaned by the two scouts should remain secret, he had resolved to place them in the power of the savages, and left secretly in the night for that purpose.

He returned with a party of braves, who were directed to remain in ambush and either shoot or capture the scouts as they left the house at daylight, while he entered the building cautiously, to divert suspicion by his presence. His rage and

dismay may be imagined when he found that his anticipated prey had flown, leaving no trace, and awaking Fanny he asked her if she had heard them depart.

She had not, and he dissembled his real feelings by calling them vile names and traitors who could mean no good by this secret slitting. On pretense of searching for them, Ambold informed his allies of the flight, and they set off upon a vain search.

The wound that Paul Gisborne had received upon that night was but a slight one, merely tearing the scalp and stunning him, and he was able to participate in the battle, disguised as an Indian, retreating with the survivors. However, he had returned since and was now living with Ambold, pressing his suit for Fanny's hand, greatly to that damsel's discomfort and disgust.

Thus matters stood when we reopen our tale, nearly a month after the battle of Tippecanoe.

Had a careful observer been upon the crest of the hill overlooking the log-cabin of Seba Ambold, and had thought it worth while to closely scrutinize the bushy top of a particular tree that stood there, he might have seen the long, ungainly limbs, bony body and bullet-head of a white man snugly ensconced in a high fork. And he might, had his ears been keen enough, have heard the following soliloquy :

"Pete Shafer, ef you was anybody else, I'd up and say you was a teetotal horned fool; and blamed ef I don't, anyhow! You've come cl'ar here to look for what is somewhat else, and who told you he was this-a-way, anyhow? Hold on; let's go at it coolly and ca'mly, beginnin' at the tail-end and brav'e it right ahead.

"First—Uriah Barham see's a gal. A doggoned purty one, too, ef big and sorter yaller-skinned. When he leaves her he 'pears like another feller from what he use to was. He don't eat nothin', sea'cely, don't take no interest in huntin' nor scoutin' like he did; don't like to be with me—which is a sure sign that his head ain't level—talks cross to Lucy—the little angel! which is still more so. Then he runs off in the m—hold on, that don't come next; mind your steps, Pete, my covey!

"He keeps a-talkin' to me, or to himself, ef he is alone,

'bout Fanny. Dreams of her, and onc't almost squished in my ribs huggin' me, besides nearly choking me with kisses when he was asleep ; thinkin' o' her, don't ye see ? Then he takes French leave in the night—now the question is, *whar did he go to?*

"Ef a feller is in love with a gal—like I'd sw'ar *he* is—won't he try to see her? And would he go t'other way from which she lives in ? Yes, I rather guess he wouldn't, which makes me out not quite so big a durned fool after all, when I come out here to hunt for him. But *whar* is he ? I can't find him nor no traces o' 'im ; but then I only come last night, and hain't hunted around any, 'cept up in this tree. But I'll — Hello ! that she is now, by ge-lory !" he muttered, excitedly, as he caught sight of a woman emerging from the house below, and slowly advancing toward the foot of the hill.

To his great delight Pete saw Fanny—as he recognized the wimin to b—begin ascending the hill, evidently taking a stroll for exercise. And although he did not care to be seen by Sela Ambold, Shafer resolved to speak to Fanny did she come near enough, and see if she could give him any information regarding Uriah Barham ; for as we have seen, he was out in quest of that personage.

Removing his gaze for an instant from her form, Shafer glanced around him with usual caution, for he knew that if the savages were defeated, they were by no means rendered the m're peaceable, and he was now in a bad seetion of the country. A light shot over his lank features and he leaned forward eagerly, with his eyes fixed upon the form of a man who was ascending the hill upon the opposite side from that where he had first observed Fanny.

But then this light died away, changing to doubt that simlly settled down into a look of supreme disgust, for Shafer had at first fancied the new-comer was the missing scout, Uriah Barham. Now, however, he saw that it was a stranger.

With all m're glances at each, Shafer awaited the course of events, hoping to secure an opportunity of speaking to Fanny alone. The two, apparently unconscious of the approach of the other, slowly neared the summit, and then, at the same moment, caught sight of each other. The maiden uttered a

slight exclamation, that did not appear to be one of joy and then said :

" Mr. Gisborne—you here?"

" It seems so," laughed the man, advancing. " But the fact is I was taken faint awhile since and let Ambold continue his hunt alone. My head pains me still; although for this cause I bless it, as it will afford me another opportunity to convince you how greatly you wrong me."

" I thought you fully understood me, Mr. Gisborne, the last time you alluded to this subject. I told you I had done at last finally, and bade you never more return to it," impatiently replied Fanny.

" I must return to it, and will never desist until we do agree. Nay, Miss Ambold, you need not frown, nor turn your proud head away, for the time has come when you must decide—ay! and in my favor," vehemently cried Gisborne.

" Ah, now I know you! It speaks so well for your manhood to clutch your fist at a woman, and speak so sternly. It is well calculated to alter my opinion of you!"

" Never mind that now, but listen to me. I have told you that I love you, and asked you to be my wife."

" And I have told you quite as often, that I will never become aught to you; so your words are only insulting to me, and—or shou'd be—humiliating to yourself," and as she spoke, Fanny turned contemptuously away, as if about to descend the hill and return to the house.

" No! you must stay and hear me out," cried Gisborne, springing to her side and grasping her arm. " If you will not quietly, then—although I should deeply regret the necessity—you will oblige me to use force."

Shaefer had heard these words with mingled feelings, and recognizing the stranger as none other than the white chief who had harangued the Indians at the village, in the interests of the British, he left his perch, and timidly began to climb the tree, inwardly vowed to free the maiden from Gisborne's insults and to take him prisoner, if possible. But the next words of Fanny shocked him, and he paused to wait the result.

" Very well, then, speak this over. But you know my answer beforehand, and rest assured that my father shall learn how his confidence in you is abused!"

"Your father—ha! ha! And do you think he will cavil at any thing I may say or do? No, my dear, he is far too deeply in my power for that. One word from me would ruin him, and it rests with you whether that word shall be uttered or not. Can it be possible that you have been so blind as not to see what he really is? That he is a *renegade*—a white Indian, in fact?" sneeringly added the man.

"Harr!" cried Fanny; but then her face paled and her head bowed.

"Bally for you, gal!" murmured Shafer, peering down from his lofty covert; "give it to him hot and heavy—right and left! D'ye hear that, you 'tarned creepin' cretter, you? Don't you feel all-fired little, now?"

"You speak bold enough, Miss Fanny," laughed Paul Gisborne, "but your face belies your words. You know that I speak the truth. And you know how how it came that those two scoundrels left your house so suddenly without his knowledge. It was because he had left for the village to set the Indians upon their track. He was with me when I was shot, there, and is one of my allies in exciting the savages to war. Now you know the worst of me, but how much the better are you! the daughter of one of my paid dependents."

The woman did not reply to the taunt, and Gisborne seated himself in a comfortable attitude upon the ground, but where he could intercept her did she attempt to flee toward the house. Shafer watched them, his indignation increasing until he could scarcely restrain himself.

"And besides this, Sela Ambold—as he calls himself, now—is a thief and murderer. It is that which leads him to shun the society of his fellow-men, not from a love of solitude, as he tells you. I hold his life in my hands, and to save himself, he has sworn that you shall marry me. And unless you yield to my wishes, he dies, and you are branded as a felon's daughter!"

"Now, Fanny, from what I have already told you, you may know that I am not a man to hesitate at trifles, or to give up a cherished plan merely because a foolish girl opposes me. If you consent, all's well and good. We will leave this place and go where our past lives will never be suspected, and I will try to make you happy. For, whether you may believe it or not

I love you deeply. Love you with all my heart, with such fire and intensity as a man can feel but once in a lifetime. But let that pass, now.

"I told you what would be the result if you were sensible enough to accept my proposal willingly; but if not—Well, in that case my plans are arranged, also. I have unlimited command over a body of Indians, who know no will but mine, and if you are obstinate, I will give them their orders. You will be taken a prisoner and conveyed to a spot far from here, where the foot of a hostile white man dares not tread. There I will meet them and you—do you know how the Indians wed? Well, you will become my wife; do you understand?"

"Enough to know you for the devil that you really are, and to feel assured that Heaven will not suffer such a vile schemer to succeed in your plans!" hotly exclaimed Fanny, her glowing face revealing the intense loathing that she felt for her persecutor. "I believe now that all you said against my father is a lie, as base and false as yourself, and before I'd submit to your will, I would die a thousand deaths! But no—I would not commit such a crime for one so despicable. Rather would I send *you* to your master—and you know right well that I have not forgotten how to send a bullet home to the mark!"

"Hooray! that's it, gal; talk up to the blazed skunk! Cuss him high and low—don't let him bluff ye! I'll stand to your back, durned ef I don't! Jest let me git a chance, and then say the word, and ef I don't go through him like a dose o' salts through a sick Frenchman, call me a sarline!"

The two started in wondering amazement, as these words saluted their hearing, as well they might, for they little dreamed that another was nigh. In fact, Shafer had become so greatly excited that he had yelled out the words without hearing it, not pausing to think of the danger, until all was over.

Then he began rapidly descending from his lofty perch, eager to avenge the insulted maiden. The noise that he made directed the gaze of the others, and springing to his feet, George hastily cocked his rifle and leveled it, knowing from Shafer's words that the eavesdropper was a foe, and that his own safety depended upon his destruction, for it was evident that the scout had overheard all his boasts.

Noting the action, Shafer dodged behind the body of the

use, an I likewise prepared his rifle. Then the renegade leaped behind a tree to cover himself.

"Run out o' the way, Miss Fanny, 'less ye mought git hurt. That's bullets got to buzz now, mighty lively, fer one or t'other o' us is got to go under this pop, shure!" called out Shafer, a lit itly worming his way down nearer the ground, carefully keeping the body of the tree between him and the threatening muzzle of his foe's rifle.

The limbs grew low down toward the greensward, but Pete knew that in leaping upon the ground he must perforce expose himself, and that the opportunity would not be missed by Gisborne. So he paused upon one of the lower limbs and veered cautiously around at his antagonist.

The three persons thus formed a sort of imperfect triangle, as Fanny had not sought to flee; only retreating a few paces. She had recognized the scout as he rapidly descended, and reassured by his words, knew that she was in safety, so far as regarded herself, and resolved to prevent the shedding of blood, if that lay in her power.

Meanwhile, other actors were advancing to play their parts, unobserved and unheeded, owing to the preoccupation of the trial. And at this point Shafer resolved to bring matters to a climax, even at the risk of receiving a rifle-ball from the British emissary.

Crouching low down upon the limb, Pete made a desperate spring and shot through the air like a huge ball, alighting upon the soft, springy sod with an adroitness that still further likened the simile, as he rebounded to his feet and stood erect, facing the tree behind which stood Paul Gisborne. As the scout calculated, the jump had cleared the space commanded by that worthy's rifle, an I he would be obliged to shift his station ere he could again cover the scout's form.

Gisborne just caught a glimpse of the flying figure, and then, as he divined the truth, stepped out from the tree and loaded his rifle. Fanny, regardless of her own danger, and only seeking to prevent murder from being done before her, glided forward and interposed her form between the rifles of the antagonists.

Ere a word could be spoken Gisborne dropped the muzzle of his rifle, and a pale look of horror or dread overspread his

features as he gasped several inarticulate words. Then with a wild, thrilling yell he turned and dashed madly down the hill, while like an echo there came from the direction in which he had been looking, first: a shrill cry, then a hoarse, deep roar that seemed by far too great a volume of sound to issue from a human throat.

Shafer and Fanny both turned around in amazement, and beheld two figures rapidly approaching; one tall and slender; the other of enormous build and just proportions. The one face pale and ghastly white, thin and emaciated, framed as with a cloud of black, waving hair; the other black as a thunder-cloud, and shining, broad and firm, but now distorted with an expression of fearful rage and hatred.

The two persons drew aside instinctively and allowed the new-comers to pass between them, and then without even glancing a single glance, the white and black dashed down the hill apparently in hot pursuit of the fleeing ranger. Shafer drew a long breath and sigh of relief as the strange couple passed from sight, and then glanced toward Fanny.

She had sunk down upon the greenward as if overcome by affright, pressing one hand upon her bosom as if to still the painful throbings of her heart. Pete forgot all else then, even his natural bashfulness, and rushed forward to support her, but Fanny motioned him away with a faint gesture, saying:

"No—I am well; it is only the affright. Who are you, and—and what did you hear up there—how much?" and there was a wild look of apprehension in her glance that Shafer interpreted rightly.

"Don't be skeered, Mi-s Fanny; they shan't hurt ye, 't as they walk over me fast," he hastened to say, looking somewhat perplexed and ill at ease.

"I am not—that is not much. But you don't know—I—how much did hear up there, about—"

"Nothin', 'deed I didn't, marry word! Only that he was tryin' to spark you, which 'tentio'n di ln't seem to pleass you overly much. And no wonder! the dratted varmint! To talk that a-way; a man what don't kn w how to court a gal better'n that, had ought to go put his head in a belp; he had that!"

"Then you didn't hear what he said about—about my father?"

"No, not a single word," glibly replied Peter, thus maintaining the propriety of his occasional *s'cript*. "When he called the old man all them pet-names—such as runnygade and so forth—I kivered my ears, shet my eyes and didn't hear nothin' that you didn't want me to," he added, solemnly.

"But you don't believe them? Although you do not know him, you won't believe that he is so dreadful wicked, will you?" pleaded Fanny, through her tears.

"Look here, little one—only you ain't so very little, after all, but it's only a habit, you know, 'cause I've got a gal that I call so. But I mean this. If the old man was anybody else, or if he didn't have the da'ter he has—in *yer*, I mean—why I'd say he was. But as it is now, I say that 'ere feller what run, lie I like all fury, and I'll stand up to it ag'in' all that comes, that he is the bestermost and truest man that ever come hair! Now—*that!*" vehemently cried Shafer, dash-ing his hat to the ground and thumping it violently with his rifle-butt.

"I see that you do believe it," sadly replied Fanny, arising, "and I do not wonder greatly that you should, although *I know you are wrong.*"

"Wait a bit—don't go jest yit," said Shafer, as the maiden turned to descend the hill; "I won't fool no more, 'cause it 'pears to make matters wuss, 'stead o' better. But this much you kin let on. Nyther me nor my friend—'Riah you know—I'll ever say one word o' what we know, on *your* a'count. It don't matter much, mhow, but you was too kind that night for any one o' us to do a harm. But now, as a friend, I'd tell the old man all this if I was you, 'bout that feller, and if he is what he says p'raps it'd be best for him to go somewhat away, if nobody knows nothin' about him. Oh, yes, I most for-git," he added; "have you seen any thin' o' 'Riah sence that night?"

"No; why should you ask me?"

"Oh, 'cause he 'peared so struck—no, not that, but he kep' a-talkin' and a-dreamin' about you, and onc't he 'most hugged—Drat it! can't I speak straight? He moved away from

home all to onc't, and I thought mebbe he come out here to see you again," spluttered Shafer, confusedly.

Fanny blushed and then turned pale, but replied as before; that she knew nothing of Barham, and then turned toward the house. Pete gazed after her with a dissatisfied air, and did not remove his eyes until he beheld her enter the house with a listless and dejected step.

"Pete Shafer," mused that worthy, "you're a fool; the wust I ever see! Jest chaw on that fer a while and see how it tastes. I'll stick up to it tell the cows come home—you're a durned fool—mind *that* now! First, you let that feller go; then you didn't ax her ef she knowed who them other two what-d'-ye-call-'ems was, and to wind up you 'suited her, and 'xposed 'Riah's secret, which mebbe ain't no secret after all, seein' he hain't been here. Ef he *was* in love with her, wouldn't he come back to see her ag'in? *I'd 'a'* done it, ef 't 'd 'a' been Lucy—bet your boots! But he didn't, so I reckon 'tain't love, after all; mebbe he'd ett too many apples. Bet that's it; Le's a awfal feller for stuslin', is that Barham!"

"Thar! I knowed it! didn't I say you's a fool? Lettin' that 'ere pesky varmint slide cl'ar off? But I'll swipe him in yet, see's I don't! No matter ef a d-zen White Devils with thar imps is after him," and with this determination Shafer tightened his belt and dashed down the declivity, following upon the broad and distinct trail left by the three persons.

Meanwhile, where was Barham?

CHAPTER VII.

A BLACK PLOT.

THERE was a great deal of sound logic in Shafer's reasoning, and he had made a pretty shrewd guess when he had determined to search for Uriah Barham in the neighborhood of Seba Ambold's forest-home, for the missing scout was indeed there. Although having seen Fanny Ambold but once, and then but for a very short time, the fancy of the young scout

had been deeply interested and he longed to see more of her.

It was not that he was actually in love with her, though how that would be in time, of course could not be told; but more than aught else, it was the difficulties that existed which urged the young man on. Her father being in league with the savages—as he had but little doubt that such was the case, after what Shafer had witnessed—and the unceremonious manner in which he had taken his leave during the night, and which Ambold would naturally present to her eyes in a distorted light—were the main ones.

After the battle of Tippecanoe, Barnam and Shafer had paid a visit to the home of the former, and spent several days with their friends. But as Peter had hinted, Uriah grew uneasy and fond of solitude, and finally ended by departing without a word of explanation.

Several days elapsed without bringing any tidings from him, and becoming uneasy, Mrs. Barnam and her daughter, Lucy, entreated Pete to hunt up and bring him back if he could find him out. And it was upon this mission that the latter was bound, when interrupted, as detailed in the preceding chapter.

Barnam, upon leaving home, as if seeking to disguise the truth from himself, had taken a roundabout course to the north-west, but gradually found himself drawing nearer to the lone cabin where dwelt the fair maiden who had interested him so greatly, and at the close of a fine day found himself in view of the cabin, having made the fifty miles that intervened between the two houses, over a hundred. He gained the hill upon which we have noticed Shafer, and then as he looked down upon the house, almost hid by the fast deepening darkness, Barnam deliberated as to whether he should boldly descend and seek a night's shelter, or wait for a chance to speak with Fanny alone.

As he watched the building, the figure of a man emerged and struck off down the river-bank, while the scout, impelled by some strong feeling, determined to dog his footsteps. He did this for only a short distance, when the man entered a boat and rapidly paddled across the river. Although Uriah had not succeeded in getting close enough to scan the features,

he yet saw sufficient to feel assured that it was not Ambold, and that he had met the man somewhere before.

That night he spent in the woods, and roamed at random through the early portion of the next morning, undecided what course to pursue. It was about midforenoon, when he was close beside the river, and hearing the noise of a can approaching at headlong speed, Barham crouched down among the bushes, and with ready weapon awaited the result.

Then a man brushed rapidly past his retreat, and despite the disordered dress and the bandage that enveloped his forehead, the scout thought he recognized the man whom the Mad Ranger had shot upon that night at the Prophet's village. Marking his course, Barham listened eagerly to see whether there were any persons upon his track, and hearing no such sounds, arose and cautiously but rapidly followed the trail, determined to discover the mystery if possible, but to unmask the stranger, at all events.

He kept a keen look-out behind as well as in front, and was greatly astonished to find that there still were no traces of pursuit. What then had caused the alarm of the stranger? But the young scout had but little time to ponder upon the question, for he beheld the fugitive at only a little distance above him, just rounding a curve in the bank, paddling a small canoe.

Rapidly advancing, Barham beheld the boat landing at the opposite side of a little cove, and another man appear among the bushes and greet the first; then they had reentered the covert, dragging the canoe after them. One glance showed the scout that if they remained where they were, he could gain the bank above them and probably overhear every word of their conversation, which he was the more anxious to do because of this last action, having recognized the last person as none other than Seba Ambold.

Reaching the further side, Barham crawled cautiously along until the very verge of the bank was gained, and composing himself to listen intently, he could distinguish the low murmur of voices. The first words that he caught were spoken by the first man he had noticed.

"I tell you that I am *not* mistaken! I saw them both too plainly for that, and he's not one to be easily forgotten, as you should know. They chased me, but I contrived to elude them

and hastened here to tell you that there is no more use in our dillydallying any longer. She won't budge, so let her break if that will do it."

"I tell you, Gisborne, that it will kill her," responded Ambold; in a hesitating tone.

"And I say it won't, for I got mad and told her all; that you were a white Indian renegade, thief and a murderer. She only turned pale; that's all. Now will you consent to the plan or must I do it on my own hook? You know that my men will do just as I say, and you had best keep friends, unless—"

"You need not threaten, Paul Gisborne, for you can't drive me. But if what you said is true, I am only too willing to have it that way. I will not be safe here any longer, in that case."

"Then listen. I will bring my men—say to-morrow night, as it is too late for to-day—and you must be at home. You can refuse us admittance, and make a show of fight; but remember not to shoot bullets, or if you do, take good aim at the tree tops, for you know what the Indians are if their blood once flows. Then we will set the house afire and when it begins to get hot, why you just open the door and try to run. The rest I will see to."

"But why—"

"Just for this reason. I know that Fanny did not believe one word of what I told her, and that she believes you are honest and all that; besides, she loves you deeply. If she knew you as you really are, she would loathe and despise you, instead. And it is upon this very affection that I must work in order to gain her consent; for although I threatened her with an *Indian marriage*, that wouldn't suit me, as you know. It must be perfectly legal and binding."

"But how work on her love? I don't understand you," added Ambold.

"You would if you had half sense, Ambold," impatiently replied Gisborne. "Don't you see—she loves you so much that when she beholds you bound to the stake and our preparations for torture; when she thinks that it is *her* obstinacy that dooms you to a terrible death by torture, and that one word will set you free, do you believe that she will hesitate

long in uttering that word?" he explained, with a diabolical laugh.

" You're right, Paul; yes, I know you are. But then," he added, with a suspicious cadence, " how do I know that you will keep faith with me? When you have her safe, I will be too much in your way, and if you scheme so deeply for one-half of the fortune, you would not hesitate long about killing me for the other."

" Bah! fool, don't you see that without you all my trouble would go for naught? Haven't you got all the papers hidden where none but yourself knows where to find them?"

" That's so; I didn't think of that. But—"

Just at this juncture Barham started in alarm. Before him upon the opposite side of the little inlet or bay, he caught a shadowy glimpse of human beings—how many he could not tell, and knowing well how dangerous a section he was in, despite the recent defeat of the Indians, who were all the more revengeful and vindictive upon that account, he surmised this to be one of those predatory bands, and rapidly retreated into the woods.

Keeping an anxious look-out, he paused, loth to leave the vicinity of the plotters, whom he had inwardly sworn to foil in their black plans, and awaited the result. For some two or three minutes he stood thus, undecided what course to pursue, when suddenly two forms darted out and passed upon the river-bank, uttering cries of rage and anger.

He saw them level their rifles, and instinctively Barham threw up his own, but then he paused with a wondering cry. They fired, but not at him. Instead, the muzzles were pointed out upon the water. Instinctively divining the truth, the young scout sprung out where he could scan the surface of the river, and then uttering a cry of rage he leveled his rifle in the same direction.

Far out toward the opposite shore Barham beheld a light canoe, darting like an arrow, under the powerful impulse of two paddles, and saw that they were wielded by none other than Gisborne and Ambold, who had most likely beheld the intruders at the same time as himself, and had instantly fled. Then with a quick aim, Barham fired.

The nearest man uttered a sharp cry and dropped his

paddle, evidently with a broken arm ; but the next moment the boat touched shore and the two miscreants fled into the woods. Hearing a footfall behind him, the scout quickly turned, but although there was a look of uneasiness upon his features, it was plain that he apprehended no bodily injury.

Before him stood two forms ; the same that he had beheld in the tree at the Indian village, and the ones who had chased Paul Gisborne from the top of the hill, an hour previously. Those whom we know as the Maniac Ranger, and his black servant, Scipio.

"What do you want with me ?" he at length asked, as the two strange beings gazed at him in silence, while rapidly re-loading their rifles ; a proceeding which he promptly imitated.

"Don't be skeered, marse," said the negro, as the other did not reply. "We is a sti'nd ob your'n, 'cause you shot at dem."

"Come, Scipio," interrupted the ranger. "we must try to cross the river or they will escape us again," and then the two singular beings strode rapidly up the river-bank, leaving the young scout gazing after them in wonderment.

Scarcely had they disappeared when Batham heard a slight rustling behind him, and instinctively leaped behind the tree nearest him. But there was no need of such precautions, for in the tall, lank form approaching he instantly recognized his brother scout, whom he had left miles distant.

"You're a purty feller, now ain't ye? Don't feel sheepish nor nothin' at all, I reckon? Go a good ways deer-huntin', you do?" began Shafter, as the two friends met and clasped hands warmly.

"Now don't begin your nonsense, Pete, for honestly I'm in trouble and need your advice."

"What's turned up now? Them critters didn't do nothin', did they?" nodding in the direction taken by the two wanderers.

In a few hasty words Batham explained what he had heard while spying the actions of the two renegades, Shafter marking off the point of each plot upon his fingers, with a ludicrous air of artfulness upon his homely features. Then Batham added :

"Now what is to be done? Of course we can't stand by

"and see her treated in such a manner, but how can we prevent it? It won't do to cross the river to hunt for those men; for a bullet is the only reward we'd be likely to get, from an ambush, and besides, I don't want to hurt him; he's her father."

"I'll tell ye; it's jest as *easy!*" quoth Shafer, exultantly. "You go right up and tell Fanny how matters stand, and jest what you've hear'n. She'll cry and sorter kick around for awhile, but that'll soon pass. Then she'll ax what shall she do? You'll tell her that you love her harder'n a mule kin kick down-hill. She'll say *oh! don't.* Then you'll say yes, and she'll kinder drap for'ard, slow and easy, so't you kin catch her. Then you'll—well, I reckon you know the rest; ef you don't, why it'll come to you, all to onc't."

"Why, Pete," Barham said, with a faint laugh, "you're crazy! I never saw her but once, and—"

"That's plenty often. I only saw Lucy once afore the second time. Besides, the road is all smoothed for you. I saw her this mornin' and got to kinder talkin' 'bout you. I told her 'at you had gone plum loony over her—"

"Why, Shafer!"

"Fact. Told her that you'd run away from home to come and see her; that you was dead stuck. She wasn't mad, nuther, and said she'd tuck a great shine to you herself; wanted to know was you married or a widder; how much land or money you'd got; whether I'd fetch you to see her, and so forth. I've forgot the rest," placidly said Peter.

"I'll break your back, Pete, if you don't talk sense! You know that we can't do that, for after all he's her father and he'd never believe that against him; then we'd be in a nice fix. I believe that the best plan would be for us to hang around until to-morrow evening, and then get into the house by some means. It would go hard but what we two could hold the cabin against all the scoundrel will bring; as he thinks the job is all cut and dried," added Barham, reflectively.

"Now you're talkin' sense, you be! The old man 'd be sure to kick up a rumpus and we'd have to tie him up. She'd like that, I guess not! And ef we *didn't*, why he could ondo all we did, jest as *easy!* Ef he'd treat his own da'ter as you hear'n tell, he wouldn't make no bones o' givin' us over."

"Well then, what shall we do?"

"Foller after that white-skinned Injun and ef we catch him —then, *you know what*. Ef we don't, that's no harm done, and we'll be about here at dusk to-morrow, to see if somethin' won't turn up. Ef they ain't too many, why we'll just walk into that applights; and even s'posin' they be too many, they won't hurt the gal, and we may have a chance to git her free upon the road, afterward. See?"

"I believe that you're right, Pete," thoughtfully responded Parham, "and the sooner we start the better. I presume we must cross the river, somehow."

"Shouldn't wonder ef 'tould be the best way. Mought be hard to foller the trail ef we's on the wrong side. Now, 'Riah, the pint is jest this 'ere. You're love-struck—never mind, we'll call it that for argyment sakes. You're love-struck, then, and that fact don't make you a mite smarter. Now afore we go any farther, jest kiver up that ar' feelin' and make b'lieve you're only helpin' a common friend. Ef you don't, nyther one o' us 'll ever git through this scrape, 'cause it's goin' to be a tough one, and one that'll need all the wit we kin scare up."

"Never fear for me, Pete; I will not be rash. Now lead on."

The two scouts struck up the river at a rapid pace, being well screened from view of any one who might chance to be watching from the other shore, until a mile had been traversed. Then they began carefully searching along the banks for the hiding-place of some canoe, well knowing that a number must be thus hidden, for use in crossing the river, as indeed they are upon every fordable stream.

But it appeared that there were none such here, or if so they were so snugly concealed as to defy discovery by al. save the one who owned it, and an hour was thus vainly spent. The chagrin of the two scouts was great, the more so, as every passing moment increased the chances against their overtaking Gisborne, and fearing to dally longer, lest he should gain such a start as to render all pursuit hopeless, Parham said:

"It's no use, Pete; we may as well swim it now as an hour hence. Come on."

"Wait a bit. We don't know who is over thar to see us, and besides, we don't want to git our wepons wet. Let's try a log. Then we kin keep kivered; besides, its easier, ef longer."

A few moments sufficed for them to find a log of the requisite size and buoyancy, which was rolled down into the water. Descending the shelving bank the two scouts secured their firearms and powder-horns upon the log and then struck out from the shore, propelling the float before them, altho' n unable to repress a shudder at contact with the icy-cold water.

They were both strong and skillful swimmers, and a few minutes sufficed to bring them within a few rods of the shore, and then they ceased their exertions to closely scan the land before them. Seeing nothing to arouse their suspicions, once more the log moved forward, but then a clear, spiteful crack broke upon the air, and a bullet, sped from the forest with a dangerous precision, dashed a shower of decayed bark into Shafer's face, half blinding him.

"Good gracious! I do believe that that was meant for me!" muttered Pete, ducking his head with the alacrity of a loon, and then reaching for his rifle.

Treading water, the two scouts soon had their rifle-muzzles protruding above the log, ready to make a desperate defense, in case the ambushed shot was followed up by an attack.

But no other report ensued, nor did they obtain a glimpse of the treacherous marksman, as they slowly drifted down with the current.

Such suspense was by no means agreeable to the hasty nature of Shafer, and as several minutes passed without further event, he muttered to Barham:

"You take and keep my rifle shady, 'Riah: I'm goin' to see who that or'nary feller was. I kin dive cl'ar to shore frem here."

"It would be certain death, Pete, don't you see? He would shoot you without any trouble, for you can take only a knife."

"Blamed ef I b'lieve that thar's anybody out thar, anyhow!"

"But the shot?"

"Oh, that's an old gun what's been layin' thar more'n a month. Reckon the sun sot it off. I'm goin' anyhow, so look out. Ef you see any person, jest lend him one; and when I

git to shore do you paddle in like all git eout," and with these words the foolhardy scout drew a long breath and sunk beneath the surface, headed toward the shore, while his comrade anxiously awaited the result.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DASTARDLY SHOT.

DURING the time that Barham had been listening to Gisborne and Ambold, those two worthies were maintaining a vigilant watch upon the line of shore that was presented to their view by the miniature bay, for the former knew that deadly enemies were searching for him, although he felt confident that his doublings had thrown them off his track. Then it was that he caught sight of the Ranger and his black follower, at almost the same instant as the young scout above.

Acting without thought and only eager to flee from their vicinity, Gisborne had run out the boat, and then under their united skill, almost reached safety before being discovered. The two first shots had sped harmlessly by, but the bullet aimed by Barham had indeed broken the left arm of the young man. Reaching the shore and entering the woods, but pausing at a point that commanded the river surface, Ambold bandaged the wound, and hung it in a rude sort of sling. Although the pain was considerable, Gisborne determined not to abandon his purpose, and after a few brief instructions to his colleague, turned and strode rapidly through the forest, proceeding with all the ease and silence of an accomplished ranger.

It was a great stake he was playing for, and one that, if won, would repay him a thousand-fold for the sufferings and trouble that he had undergone. But a heavy foreboding rested upon his heart, as he thought of that strange being, the Maniac Ranger, and it seemed as though he could not breathe freely while knowing that he was near at hand.

Gisborne knew right well who the Ranger was, and what

was the connection between him and Fanny, although neither of them suspected the truth. And he knew, too, why this person cherished such a deadly hatred toward himself and Seba Ambold; a hatred that nothing but death could appease. But despite him, with the aid of her pretended father, he hoped to succeed in his plans concerning Fanny.

Paul Gisborne traveled until late that night, and then feeling weak and faint from fatigue and the pain of his wound, he ate a cold lunch, stowed away in his pouch, and then finding a sheltered nook at the foot of a hill, among the jagged rocks whose crests would serve to break the cold night-breeze, he crouched down, and arranging his wounded arm, strove to sleep. But he had a slight fever, and slumber evaded his wooing.

As he lay there, restlessly moving now and then, wild fancies thronged his brain and dark scenes of his past life came up before his mental vision with painful distinctness. Strive as he would, one scene especially would return, again and again, until he would grit his teeth fiercely and mutter deep and bitter curses.

Thus an hour or more elapsed, when just as he started to his feet with the intention of renewing his journey, the sound of approaching footsteps and low murmuring of voices met his ear. Crouching hastily down, Gisborne grasped his weapon with one hand, ignorant whether they were friends or enemies.

But then as the fresh wind brought the words to his ears with greater distinctness, a shudder crept over his frame, and although favored by the dense shade, his face grew pale and ghastly, while his eyes gleamed with a strange, deadly light. The new-comers were none other than the Mad Ranger and Scipio, the black.

"I am weary, good Scipio," the former was saying, "and must rest before I go further. Besides, it is vain our trying to find them in the darkness. Perhaps 'twould have been better to have paused upon his trail where we were when darkness came."

"Dis ain't no place fo' you, marse; but if you'll set down till old Scip kin git some bushes, he'll fix you up a little hut."

"No, I do not need it," replied the Ranger, wearily, as he

sung himself upon the ground, at but a few feet distant from the crouching form of the renegade. "And I must not rest long—I can not! My trouble bids me continue on, on, no rest, no peace until—ah, will there ever be a time when I shall know either again?"

"De next time, marse, mebbe 'll be it. He can't git off forebber. 'Pears like de next time we'll fetch de warmint so' sure, 'deed it jest does!"

"But think—to have hunted for so long a weary time, and then when found that they both should escape. It all came back to me to-day when I saw him, and it made my woo seem greater and more strong. Before it had seemed like a horrible dream; I had hunted so long in vain that my sorrow had become blunted, as it were; but now, I shall die unless I can avenge my wrongs! Oh, Myra! my child—where art thou?" and the man's voice sunk to a low moan and he sat in silence with bowed head.

For some minutes all was still. The negro did not appear to dare break the silence, and crouched at a little distance, seeming to lend the gloom a deeper shade of blackness, until his frame appeared like that of some fabled monster of mythology. And Gisborne glared at their motionless shapes with intense hatred, not unmixed with a sentiment of dread.

More than once did he slowly raise the heavy rifle and glance along the barrel until the sights drew true upon the shadowy form of the Ranger, while his finger itched to pull the trigger. But prudence forbade. He knew only too well the dog-like fidelity of the black, and in his master's defense he would fight like a demon; if need be, would tear him limb from limb like a wild beast.

"Mars?" at length uttered Scipio, hesitatingly.

"Well, Scipio?"

"I's awf'le thirsty; 'pears like I'll choke purty soon ef I don't git some water. That's a crik not fur from hyar; kin I go git a drink?"

"Certainly—here, fill this canteen; I am thirsty also," and tossing the slave a flask, the Ranger once more bowed his head in gloomy silence.

The treacherous eyes of the renegade glared with Satanic joy as he beheld the huge form of the guard move away in

the night, and after a few seconds he cautiously cocked his rifle. The Ranger started and raised his head as if the click had met his ear, but did not arise.

With wildly-beating heart, but nerves like steel, Gisborne stealthily raised the muzzle, until it bore full upon the head of the maniac. For one brief instant it remained there, motionless as the finger of fate, and then the trigger was touched with a steady hand and the loud report rung out upon the still night-air, sounding to the excited brain of the wanderer, like a thunderbolt.

Through the glare of the blinding flash, Gisborne beheld the form of the Ranger spring up and then fall headlong to the ground, with a deep, hollow groan. Then he turned and fled with wild-throbbing brain from the spot of blood.

He knew that a deadly avenger would be upon his track, and that were he discovered the murdered man would be terribly revenged. And scarcely had he taken a dozen steps, when he heard the loud voice of the negro calling to his master.

Rapidly traversing the ground, Gisborne left the hill and entered a sort of valley, that was dark and gloomy beyond that of the higher ground. He then heard a wild yell from the spot he had just left; a yell of horror and agony, and knew that Seipio had found the body of his master.

Then came a horrible howl or roar, so loud and terrible that his limbs faltered and his blood seemed to curdle in his veins, for he knew that the avenger of blood was upon his trail; that now a meeting could have but one ending. And for an instant he almost wished the black deed was undone; but only for an instant.

Knowing the folly and danger of flight—for the sounds of his footsteps would only serve to guide those of his foe, and he could not hope to cope with him in speed, weakened as he was with pain and loss of blood—Gisborne crouched down along a clump of bushes that grew beside a huge boulder, and awaited the *dénouement* in stern suspense. As well as he could with only one hand, the murderer began reloading his rifle, but as he poured in the powder, he paused and held his breath lest it should betray him.

He could hear plainly the heavy tread of the black as he

approached his covert, with low growls of rage and vengeance as he stumbled along the rough way, Gisborne drew his knife, trusting that if discovered, one lucky thrust might free him forever.

But the end was not to come yet, and the slave passed by the murderer's ambush without suspecting that the object of his search was almost within arm's length of him. Not until the heavy tramp died away in the distance, did Gisborne dare to inhale a full breath, so great had seemed his peril.

He listened eagerly for some moments, but all was silence save the mournful wailing of the chilling wind and the occasional howl of some far-off animal. Then the renegade cautiously left his covert, but paused and quickly shrunk back again.

On a little ridge, a few paces distant, he could distinguish the gigantic form of the negro, slightly crouching forward with bended head, as if in acute listening. With trembling fingers Gisborne began charging his weapon, forgetting that the powder was already down, and in his agitation not noticing how far the ramrod protruded when the bullet was driven home, upon the double charge.

The dusky form was still there, standing as motionless as one of the huge bowlders that lay all about him, and then Paul Gisborne slowly raised his rifle and glanced along its barrel. But still he hesitated.

The outlines were so faint and obscure that, owing to the position assumed by the negro, Gisborne could not decide where to aim. For he well knew that the shot must be instantaneously fatal, or else his own doom would be sealed, as his condition was not fit to endure either a hand-to-hand struggle, or sustain a chase.

These thoughts flashed through his brain like magic, and then the rifle was lowered, slowly and reluctantly. And all unconscious of his narrow escape, Scipio exerted his keenest sense of hearing to discover the whereabouts of his enemy, feeling confident that had he sought safety in flight, the sound of his footsteps along the obstructed path, rendered doubly difficult by the gloom, would have met his ears.

Fearing to delay longer, lest the negro should again search the valley, Gisborne crocheted low down, and keeping the huge

boulder between himself and the watcher, slowly glided away from the spot of danger. At every whistle of the wind, or rustle of the leaves upon the stunted trees, the fugitive would pause in trembling dread lest it was the coming steps of the avenger; and in that long five minutes, he suffered the horrors of a thousand deaths, so greatly had the late events shaken his usually strong and steady nerves.

But at the end of that time he had turned the corner of the hill and placed such a distance between him and his foe, that there was no longer any fear of his footsteps betraying his whereabouts, and with a muttered exclamation of relief, Gisborne quickened his pace. Skirting the hill he once more turned his face in the direction where he knew his savage allies were awaiting his approach, and wearily trudged onward.

His wounded arm now began to pain him severely, and he was forced to pause upon the brink of a little brook and loosen the bandage and bathe it in the cold water. Thus refreshed he once more resumed his course.

Although he felt as though an hour's sleep would be almost priceless, he did not dare yield to the inclination, for right well he knew that with the first dawn of day a relentless and subtle foe would take up his trail and follow it to the utmost. His only chance of safety was to reach the protection of his friends, and then he vowed to send out a force to capture or kill the negro, who was now the only remaining obstacle in his path—as he thought and believed.

The eastern horizon was becoming faintly tinged with a golden light as he paused upon a slight eminence, and placing one hand to his lips, Gisborne sounded a peculiar, long-drawn, quavering whoop, that floated for a great distance before dying away. Then he advanced, as an answering cry resounded from the valley below, with a sigh of relief.

The renegade uttered three short, sharp cries that were also answered, and in a few moments he found himself surrounded by a score of painted savages, who greeted him with evident joy, mingled with deep respect. With one of these, a tall athletic warrior who appeared higher in rank than his companions, Gisborne entered a rude sort of hut and flung himself upon a pile of furs that were still warm from the recent occupancy of the savage.

"Well, Red Leaf, I have got work for you and your braves," said Gisborne.

"Walipadootah is glad. His heart is heavy since the great fight, and his hatchet is thirsty for blood," responded the savage in the same dialect, while his little eyes gleamed brightly in the firelight, and a scowl disturbed his naturally stern and forbidding countenance.

"You must wait a little longer, I fear, brother, but the time will come when your hand will tire of striking and your hatchet grow dull with so much work. But listen—I have done a great work to-night, one that will fill the heart of my red brother with gladness. You remember the White Devil?"

A convulsive shudder ran over the red-skin's frame, and he cast a startled look around him, while one hand instinctively clutched the hilt of his knife. But he did not speak in words.

"Well, I met him to-night, and he will never more send wailing and tears into the lodges of the red-men. I killed him. See?" touching his wounded arm lightly, "this is his mark."

"You killed him; but where is his scalp?"

"Still upon his head. But it shall blacken in the smoke of my brother's lodge before another night. I killed him, but I was badly wounded and had to flee from the Thunder-Cloud, who would have killed me."

"Red Leaf killed the spirit once, but it came to life again," gravely remarked the savage. "And so he will now. The bullets pass through him and leave no sign. He can not be killed!"

"You'll find that he can and is. But now the great black-skinned man will be on my trail, and he must be killed. Let some of your braves go out and hide along my path, and they will find him. Then follow it up until they reach the two mounds. At the foot of the one toward the sunrise they will find the body of their great enemy."

The chief left the tent in silence, but evidently far from being convinced, firmly believing in the invulnerability of the Ranger, although he dispatched a dozen braves as directed.

Then he returned to the hut, and with rude skill set the broken arm of Gisborne, who was now rendered almost frantic with pain.

He had Red Leaf prepare a soothing potion from some herbs, and under the influence of the opiate, soon sunk into a deep and dreamless slumber. Knowing that he would be unable to keep his appointment with Seba Ambold, Gisborne had not divulged his plans to the chief, intending to defer his visit until the succeeding day.

CHAPTER IX.

BESIEGED.

We left the two scouts, Barham and Shafer, in rather a peculiar situation; the latter just diving for the shore, and his comrade eagerly scanning the land in momentary expectation of beholding the enemy spring out in full view. But in this he was agreeably disappointed.

And then Pete arose from the water at the foot of the bank, like a modern merman, and with a motion for Barham to come on he nimbly clambered up to a level with the forest, peering quickly around in search of the one who had discharged the treacherous shot. But contrary to his expectations nothing less innocent than the trees and bushes met his gaze, and Barham also gained the shore without molestation.

Grasping their weapons the scouts sprung up the bank and sought shelter each behind a tree, eager to avenge their affright. From tree to tree and bush to bush, the scouts glided nimbly, after closely scrutinizing each covert, in hopes of finding their foe, but naught rewarded their efforts, until at length they were forced to admit that whoever it had been, had fled.

"Barham, that's a pa'r of us," said Pete, with a sort of disgust.

"True; but what else could we do? How did we know but what there were a dozen enemies hidden here?"

"Well, 'twon't do no good to talk 'bout it; 'twon't make it no better, nor yet help us along on that trail. Let's strike out."

"But who could it have been? and why didn't he—they—are more than once? There was plenty of time," mused Barnham.

"Here's the tree where he stood; see, here's the footprints," and Shafter pointed down to the traces alluded to.

"A white man! Could it have been—?"

"Reckon 'twas; we floated down a good bit. What shall we do? They ain't his tracks, 'cause he w'ars boots. I saw that on t'other side," added Pete.

"It must have been Ambold, then," said Uriah, thoughtfully. "But come, let us hunt up the other. He is safe from us, for the present, anyhow."

Without more ado, the two scouts struck out into the woods, diverging from each other slightly so as to increase their chances of finding the trail, and at the same time tending toward the point where the two men had landed. They felt confident that Gisborne had proceeded almost due west, from their knowledge of the habits of the savages, and hoped thus to regain some of the time they had lost, and find the traces more speedily than by going direct to the landing-place.

Several hours had elapsed since the flight of the two renegades, owing to the protracted search for a canoe, and then the subsequent delays, and it was a very faint hope the scouts entertained of overtaking their enemy. Had it not have been for his wound, they would have abandoned the search at once as useless.

Their calculations proved correct, for Barnham soon struck the trail and promptly signalled the discovery to Shafter; then when that worthy came up they pressed forward upon the trail at the greatest speed possible. When night fell, although they had evidently gained upon, they had not overtaken Gisborne, and the darkness forced them to pause, as it was no prudent to trail by torchlight.

Long in the night, Shafter, who was upon guard, heard the far-off report of a rifle, and, although he did not know it, this was the deathly shot fired by the man they were in quest of. Listening with natural suspense and eagerness, Pete thought he could distinguish the yells as of some wild beast, but was not certain; and awaking Barnham he related the events.

Together they watched through the remainder of the night,

but nothing further occurred out of the way, and eating a hearty lunch the two scouts deliberated upon what course they should pursue. It was plainly evident that they could not hope to overtake the renegade, and it was a long distance back to the lone cabin where they must be that night, if they hoped to frustrate the plot against Fanny Ambold.

"We kin do it—jest as *easy!*" quoth Shafer, wiping his mouth upon his sleeve and arising. "It cain't be much more'n a mile to the spot whar I heerd them sounds and that won't make no differ. Let's go and see what it was, anyhow."

Barham consented, after some little hesitation, for it seemed like running a useless risk; and then they once more took up the trail, seeing that it led in the required direction. This now became more difficult to follow, as the ground grew hard and stony, in places, but their skill was equal to the emergency, and yard by yard it was traced out.

As they reached the foot of a hill, Shafer, who as usual was in advance, abruptly paused and uttered an exclamation. No explanation was needed, for Barham's eyes had also caught sight of the object that called it forth.

Before them the sward was torn and trampled, while a small pool of coagulated blood stood there, as if the ground had shrunk from absorbing its crimson offering. There could now be no doubt as to why the rifle had been discharged in the dead of night, but who had been the victim? and if killed, where was the body?

Shafer suddenly uttered a low grunt and arose erect. Pointing significantly at a huge footprint, he said:

"Do you know that sign, 'Riah?'"

"I should. If I am not mistaken it's the track of that negro who goes with that ranger or lunatic."

"You're not mistaken, 'cause it is his'n. I marked it yes'tday. Let's see what it means, anyhow."

In a few minutes they discovered the rock where Gisborne had crouched, and instantly divined the truth. But had he escaped the negro? for that it was the maniac who had been shot, was plainly evident.

Their curiosity was now fully excited and the scouts took up the trail of the renegade and followed it through all its windings, until it proceeded once more in a direct course, after

leaving the high ground. Resolved to see the end of the adventure, and feeling confident that they could return to the hut in ample time, they rapidly followed the trail, that was now plain and distinct, as the renegade had trod heavily, as if utterly jaded.

Finally it crossed a rocky ridge where the scouts lost all trace of it, when they determined not to dally longer lest they should be too late. While so near the summit, Batham resolved to take a good survey of the surrounding country, before returning, and for this purpose scaled a huge boulder that stood upon the extreme summit, and then gazed keenly and deliberately around him.

This rock was of nearly a square form, and some two yards across its top, which was jagged and uneven. Upon three sides it was so nearly perpendicular that a cat could scarcely have scaled it, while the fourth was broken and uneven, with a series of rough, irregular steps, by which he had ascended.

His scouting was abruptly terminated by a startling occurrence. From his left hand there sounded a sharp crack, and he felt a stinging pain as a bullet knocked the hat from his head, slightly tearing his scalp in its passage. The surprise, added to the shock, caused him to fall, and drew a faint cry from his lips.

Shafer saw his friend fall, and hearing the shot followed by a series of exultant yells, knew that they had fallen into an ambush, most probably placed upon his trail by Gisborne in anticipation of being followed. Although feeling confident that he had not been seen, and that he could easily effect an escape if attempted, Shafer did not once think of following such a course.

Through whimsical and eccentric, the scout was brave and wholly devoted to Barkam, whom he had seen fall as if dead, and resolving to die with him if such must be, but to stand by his body to the last, Peter nimbly scaled the rock, hidden the while from his enemies. To his great joy he beheld Batham raise his head—from which the blood was flowing profusely—and motion for him to crouch low down.

" You ain't dead, then, 'Riah, be ye?"

" Why didn't you run, man? You could have gotten off easily."

"What—and left you? never?" replied Shafer, in the same subdued tone.

"It's only one life more—your staying."

"Mebbe; but we'll make it hot fur 'em, fur a while, anyhow, fust! But sharp now, and—give 'em ge-lory!"

While this hurried interchange was going on, the two scouts had not been idle, but had gained such positions as would command the front of the rock, and at the same time allow nothing but their own heads to be seen, and that only by such of the enemy as might peer over the escarpment. They could hear the wild yells and confused jabberings, as the savages approached, and knew that they little suspected the reception that was being prepared for them.

Barham, although still slightly bewildered by the shock of the bullet, was able to wield his rifle as usual, and at the exclamation of Pete Shafer he nobly performed his part of the task. It had been drawn forth by the abrupt appearance of a gayly-plumed head above the escarpment, and then that of a second, close behind the other.

Barham fired, as he was the nearest, and true to its aim the bullet pierced the brain of the foremost savage. With the never-failing death-shriek the Indian tossed his arms wildly aloft, and sprung backward from the rock, carrying his comrade with him, while the double catastrophe was greeted with shrill yells of rage and surprise by those below.

"Load quick, man; it's for life, now!" gritted Shafer, as he heard the scratching of moccasins upon the difficult ascent, and knew that another rush was being made.

Shafer laid his pistols before him and then brought his long heavy rifle to a level. Scarcely had he done so when the shaven poll of an enemy rose above the verge, and catching sight of his foe, strove to leap upon the top of the rock.

At either side were several more heads, and the scouts felt that the crisis had now come. If they could defeat this assault, it was not likely that another one would follow soon, if, indeed, the savages did not flee in discomfiture.

The scout's rifle sounded, and another death-yell arose, as but that one result could follow a shot; the distance separating the foes not exceeding five yards. Dropping his rifle at the report, Shafer grasped his pistols.

Two of the savages had already gained the summit, but as they arose from their hands and knees, the double report rung out, closely followed by a third, as Barham finished loading. Such a deadly reception would have cowed the bravest red-skin that ever rung the war-whoop, and with yells of dismay the warriors leaped in terror from the fatal rock.

Thus the golden opportunity was lost. With empty fire arms, or with only the two pistols of Barham, had they pressed onward then, the scouts must have been forced into a hand-to-hand fight, when they could easily have been picked off by the free savages. But having five men killed or disabled, when they had anticipated a bloodless triumph, not having seen Barham arise after the ambushed shot, was discouraging indeed; and the survivors now withdrew to consult upon what was the best course for them to pursue.

This respite was improved by the besieged scouts in reloading their weapons, and in preparing for another defense, if the occasion for such should arise. Although naturally elated at their triumph, they by no means felt at ease, or assured of an auspicious ending of the adventure.

And this, too, was especially unfortunate—as they believed, not knowing the real situation of the renegade, Gisborne—as it would delay their return to the cabin of Seba Ambold, in time to frustrate the plans of those two worthies as agreed upon the day before. This thought worried Barham's mind far more than did his new danger.

"How d'ye like it, 'Riah?" whispered Shafter, keeping his eyes riveted upon the edge of the rock, which seemed the only means by which they could be reached.

"What's the use of asking? If it was only us two I wouldn't mind it so much," moodily responded Barham, in the same tone.

"Tell ye what I'll do," added Pete, his eyes glistening as if a brilliant thought had occurred to him. "Jest wait until they begin to climb up ag'in; then I'll drop down over here and push the rock over on top of 'em! That'll do the job! Bet yer boots it will!"

Barham did not reply to this truly original idea, but glanced anxiously around him as if seeking some means of escape; but instead, a deep shade settled upon his features. This was

called up by observing a tall, spreading tree growing below the rock, upon the hillside, but whose top towered high above it, within half rifle range.

Around the trunk of this grew vast quantities of grape-vine, that, although now denuded of their foliage, still formed a comparatively secure screen by which a man could ascend the tree, providing caution was used. And once the upper limbs were gained, it would be an easy matter for a good marksman to pick off the scouts, one after the other, especially if their attention was diverted by an attack in front.

Shasfer followed the glance of his comrade, and he too became anxious. This was a danger of no ordinary magnitude, and it was not to be expected that the savages would allow it to remain untried, now that they were burning to avenge the death of their comrades.

"We must mind that, 'Riah. It's the only p'int they kin touch us from, 'cept over here. My eyes is the sharpest and I'll watch the tree, while you 'tend to the front. You take the pistils; they'll do fer short range, and let me have the rifles. Or shall we make a break for it? They can't be so very many."

"Best wait a-bit. We don't know how they're fixed below, and they'd be sure to pick one of us off, if not— 'St!"

As he uttered the low hiss that interrupted his sentence, Barham raised his pistol and held it poised at a certain part of the rock. His keen ear had distinguished the faint scratching of a moccasined foot slipping upon the side of the rock, and divined that an attempt was being made to get a shot by surprise.

He then caught sight of a rifle being protruded over the cliff, and then a nodding plume appeared. But ere he could see enough of the head to bury a bullet, the savage slipped and fell backward from his perch with a little yell of alarm; the rifle being discharged in the air.

"Wonder ef his head hurt the stuns any?" murmured Shasfer, who had glanced around, then resuming his watch upon the tree, he uttered a bitter curse.

He had just caught sight of a copper-tinted leg as it was drawn up into the body of the tree, and found that their worst fears were about being realized, by a bit of carelessness

upon his part. But there was no use in regretting what was past, and Pete directed his attention toward remedying the misfortune.

Their bodies were in a manner protected by several projecting pinnacles upon the rocks, and to secure a fair shot, the marksman must ascend the tree nearly to its top. The savage had nearly reached the required position when Shafer caught a glimpse of one arm, and with true aim and unerring hand he sent a bullet to feel its texture.

No sound followed, but Pete felt confident that he had not missed, as the arm swung helplessly from its hold, and then the savage paused, securely concealed. Wild, exultant yells sounded from those upon the ground, and then there came the suspicious rustling upon the side of the boulder.

Trusting in his companion, Shafer did not remove his aim from the tree, ready to take advantage of the attempt should the mark-man endeavor to secure a shot, despite his disabled arm. Barham's eyes glittered ominously as the dusky poll of an Indian slowly arose above the level of the rock, and he covered it with the muzzle of a pistol; but he did not fire.

In its forehead he could see the ghastly hole made by his first shot, and knew that this was but a ruse to draw his fire. A second one appeared beside the first, but with the same result; then the "lay-figures" were suddenly dropped and several others arose whose gleaming eyes and working features were plain evidence of their life.

CHAPTER X.

TIMELY AID.

Barham's eye and hand were true, despite the blood that trickled over his face, and at the report one of the enemy bounded backward, a harmless corpse. At the next crack a savage sprang upon the rock and fell at full length, quivering and clutching at the rock in his agony.

As we have said, Shafer was keeping a close watch upon

the occupant of the tree, unmindful of those behind him, seeing assured that his comrade could keep them at bay with his four pistols. At the first report he detected a motion of the marksman among the limbs; at the second he saw the dark muzzle of a rifle-barrel thrust out and rested in a fork, and knew that the Indian did not dare attempt a shot with his one sound arm, unaided.

The scout saw also that in order to take aim along the barrel the savage would have to protrude his entire head from his covert, and leveling his own rifle, Shafer coolly selected the spot. Another shot from Barham, and then the marksman appeared fully in view, evidently believing that the white men were so thoroughly occupied with those in front that they would have scant time to devote to him.

But the consequence of this error soon struck him forcibly, in the shape of a rifle-bullet, just as he bent his head to glance along the rifle. He never uttered a groan, but slowly toppled over backward, and hanging suspended for a moment by one leg, then fell like a log to the ground, crashing through the limbs and vines, while his gun was discharged harmlessly into the air.

And then a sudden interruption came that caused all to pause and glance hastily around. It was a wild, hoarse, roaring howl that seemed too terrible and unearthly to proceed from mortal lungs.

But it did, nevertheless, and the combatants, both white and red, gazed upon the huge dark form that came bounding with long leaps toward them, along the ridge, swinging a long and heavy rifle around his head, like a feather. A general cry was the result, but of a far different nature. That of the savages was one of horror and dread; that of the whites one of pleasure and joy.

Then the red-men turned and fled at headlong speed down the hill, forgetting their dead and dying in their alarm, while the two scouts called aloud to attract the negro's attention. For it was indeed Scipio.

"Hello you!" yelled Shafer, as the black paused. "what d'ye mean by comin' a-runnin' all our game off fer, sp'ilin' fun that a-way? 'Tain't fair, durned ef it is!"

"Dry up, Shafer," muttered Uriah, as they descended the

rock that had been their preservation. " You'll make him mad, and perhaps we can get him to help us at the cabin, yonder, to-night?"

" What d'yé say, marse?" asked Scipio, leaning upon his rifle and gazing fixedly at the two scouts.

" Nothin', only axed was you well; that's all. How's your folks, anyhow?" added Pete, extending his hand.

" Marse," said Scipio, turning abruptly to Barham, and speaking earnestly, " kin I trust you as a fri'nd?"

" You can. You saved us from a tight fix, just now, and if we can do any thing for you, we will do our best," warmly replied Uriah.

" Well den, I will. You know my marse—de one I was wid w'en you see'd us yest'day? Well, he got shot las' night in de head, and 'pears like he's gwine to die. I cain't git him to speak to me, though he is awake and kin set up; 'pears like he don't know nuffin' at all," and the negro choked down a great gulp, with an effort.

" Where is he? I will do what I can, although I fear that will be but little. We saw the place, and heard the shot last night, where he must have been hurt. In fact, we were following that man's trail, but couldn't catch him," returned Barham.

The black did not reply, but led the way with rapid strides along the rocky ridge, closely followed by the two scouts. In a few moments they came in sight of a sort of a rude fort, and within it they could see the form of the Maniac Ranger slowly striding to and fro. He gazed fixedly at the scouts, and then advanced with a sad, peculiar smile, saying:

" Goo l-morning, gentlemen. Scipio, what is this? why have you—?"

" 'Deed, marse, I fough't you was gwine to die, an' hearin dese men a-shootin' down yander, I didn't know but what dey could help you; so I went after 'em."

" You meant well, but I fear you troubled them unnecessarily. The wound only pains me but little now, as the bullet glanced off without fracturing the skull, and it seems to have done me good, instead of harm. The oblique dizziness and burning tightness are all gone now. But, Scipio, have you seen any thing of him?"

"No, I hain't, but dese yere said dey was out huntin' of him. Mebbe dey kin tell ye whar he is."

"Do you—can you?" eagerly cried the Ranger, turning toward Barham, with eyes flashing and small hands tightly clasped together.

"If you mean this Paul Gisborne—"

"The man whom you shot at in the canoe, yesterday?"

"Yes; if you mean him, he is doubtless safe now with his Indian allies."

"Then he has escaped me once more! But no! I will follow him wherever he may have gone, and will strike him even in the midst of his men, though death may be mine the next instant!" cried the Ranger, wildly.

"Wait and listen to me for a moment, and I can tell you a better plan than that," said Barham, eagerly. "When you came up yesterday, I was listening to the plans of those two men, and I overheard enough to assure you a meeting with him, if that is what you desire, and at the same time you can afford assistance to a wronged and persecuted girl. But perhaps you know her—Fanny Ambold?" he added, significantly.

"The fair maiden? indeed I do; but go on."

And then the young scout quickly detailed the plot that he had overheard at the river-bank. For a few moments the Ranger appeared buried in a deep reverie. Then he slowly uttered:

"And you say she is the daughter of that man—the other one who was in the canoe?"

"Yes; I heard him call her so."

"My God! if it should be!" murmured the Ranger, in broken, husky tones. "Listen, while I explain, in my turn. These two then are the men who wrecked my life, and who stole my little Myra—oh, long years ago, when I was young and far different from what I am now. Ever since I have been searching for them, but without finding either until that night when I shot—and killed, as I thought—that man in the Indian town. I believed that my child was dead—had been killed by him, in my fits of insanity, and so I sought revenge. But can I have been wrong—can it be that *she* is my child?"

The two scouts gazed at each other in amazement. Then Pete Shafer spoke:

"'Riah, I'll jest bet my head ag'in' a cookey that he's right! Now would a father—a real sure-enough father, I mean—would a father, I say, treat sech a blamed nice da'ter as *that*, in sech a pesky mean way? No, I say that he *wouldn't*. Consequently, Fanny ain't Fanny, but somebody else; and—durned ef I know what to think—so that!"

"Well, sir," resumed Uriah, turning to the Ranger, "you may be right, or wrong; of course I can not say. But if you want to help her, an' meet this man, the sooner we start the better. It is this night that they carry her off, and once she is in their power, we can do nothing."

"I am ready; let us go."

"But, marse," interposed Scipio, anxiously, "you ain't fit to walk. But let us fix a litter to kerry you on."

"No, my goo! Scipio, I am strong now. So strong that I could wear even you out; for I am going to meet my child—my long-lost Myra! For it *must* be her. If I should be wrong now, the shock would strike me dead!" he murmured, in a low tone, as the little party passed from the fort and began descending the hill.

Despite the weak condition of the Ranger, bodily, his powerful will sustained him through the long and hurried march. Had he been allowed, he would have dashed forward at full speed, until he fell dying.

The one thought and hope now inspired him, and Barham shuddered as he thought of what the result might be, did that hope prove a delusion. And truly, it seemed a very faint one, founded upon exceedingly slight grounds.

The night had long settled down over the earth when the river was reached, and fearing to enter the water while their bodies were in so heated a condition, the little party quickly collected sufficient logs to form a raft, and then paddled across the river, landing at some distance above the house. With hearts filled with strongly-exciting emotions, they advanced, fearing lest they should be too late.

But their dread was groundless. The house stood dark and silent, and upon a scouting around, no sign of an enemy was to be found. Then securing a favorable position, the little party resolved to await the mock attack of Giborne and his savage allies.

Slowly and drearily the night passed away, and nothing out of the way occurred, nor did there come to their anxiously-strained ears, any sound of human life save their own long-drawn breathing.

"Where was Paul Gisborne?"

CHAPTER XI."

CONCLUSION.

WHEN it became evident to all that the attack was not to be made that night as arranged, from some unknown cause, the two scouts composed themselves to sleep, while the Ranger and Scipio watched, by request of the last two. And so wearied were the men that the rays of the morning sun failed to awaken them, and not until a fearful alarm rung out did they open their eyes and spring to their feet.

A fearful alarm, we say, and truly it was a fearful sight that met the startled gaze of the scouts. A loud, clear rifle-crack had aroused them, closely followed by a shrill, piercing shriek of mortal agony, that for the moment seemed to them that of a woman.

Shortly after the men arose the Ranger took his rifle, and motioned Scipio, who arose with the intention of following him, to remain where he was, passed through the belt of bushes and entered the little clearing that surrounded the forest-home of Seba Ambold. What his intentions were, none could now tell, but he strode directly toward the cabin door, as if about to demand admittance.

But he was fated never to reach it. A loophole was suddenly opened and the dark muzzle of a rifle protruded threateningly. The Ranger paused and extended his hand as with a motion of peace, but then the sharp, spiteful crack echoed forth, and with a wild, thrilling cry of dread agony, the ill-fated Ranger fell forward upon his face, while the loophole was suddenly closed.

When the two scouts sprung up they beheld the negro,

Scipio, just lifting the bleeding form of his master from the ground, and with a low wail of horror. As if petrified they stood motionless until the black approached with his gory burden, and entered the bushes beside them. Then they pressed around with eager proffers of assistance, but the negro motioned them away with a stern air, saying :

"No, no, you mustn't touch him; nobody but ol' Scip must tend to him. You watch yere and keep dat man from gittin' 'way. Dat's al'," and with a look of mingled ferocity and grief, the giant moved away with his senseless burden and disappeared among the trees toward the river.

As if impelled by some superior power the two scouts obeyed his directions, and carefully watched the lone cabin, feeling a strange sensation of awe and uneasiness, that damped even the spirits of Shafer. No one appeared from the house, and the morning slowly wore away, when Scipio returned, bearing the form of the wounded Ranger, who was conscious, and who greeted the men with a faint, ghastly smile. But they turned away with a shudder, for they could not mistake that look; death had set his stamp upon the pallid brow.

So they remained until night once more set in, without any change. The Ranger still breathed and was conscious, speaking now and then to Scipio, who hovered over him like a grim shadow.

At about the third hour after the moon arose, the scouts uttered a low hiss and shrunk closer in their leafy covert. And the next minute a body of men filed into the open space, and paused, while one of their number approached the cabin, alone.

They numbered less than a dozen, and it was plain from their trappings that they were savages. Paul Gisborne had kept his appointment with Seba Ambold.

The three men leveled their rifles at the exposed forms, and awaited the result. Gisborne hailed Ambold, knocking upon the door, and it became evident that he was recognized, for a short parley ensued. Then with a low, muttered curse Gisborne left the house and approached his men.

To do so he had to cross a narrow strip of bright moonlight, and although he little dreamed of the truth, a deadly

rifle was bearing full upon him, only waiting for his foot to touch this line, to send its contents upon their mission of vengeance. Then its light shone upon his form, and the rifle of Scipio, the black, rung out, and with a low cry the renegade fell in his tracks, tearing and clutching the ground with his sound arm, in his agony of pain.

Alarmed, the savages turned to flee, but two more rifles spoke, held by hands that scidom failed, and then the two scouts and the negro broke cover with wild yells. Their pistols cracked with fatal effect, and but four of the red-men ever lived to tell of the fearful end of their ill-fated chief and comrades.

Upon returning from the pursuit, it was found that Paul Gisborne was still alive, and the negro rudely dragged him to where the wounded Ranger was lying. The renegade uttered a cry of dread, and gasping a name, sunk back, dead!

The two scouts stared in mute amazement, for that name was a woman's name! Then the truth flashed upon them, and several incidents that had appeared strange to them at the time, were now made clear. The Maniac Ranger was a woman, who had assumed the disguise so foreign to her sex, the better to search for her stolen child.

Their attention was now arrested by the opening of the cabin-door, and Ambold cautiously emerged, evidently in doubt as to what had really occurred. Shafer silently glided around to the rear of the building, and approaching unseen, sprung upon the renegade and hurled him violently to the ground. At his cry Fanny rushed forth, and was met by Barham, who hastily explained the wonderful truth to her, and then led her to where her mother was lying.

It was a strange and solemn scene then presented, as Ambold was brought forward, and then when confronted with the one whom he had so deeply wronged, he confessed the truth and pleaded for mercy. The dying woman, supremely happy in the embrace of her long lost child, granted this, and adjured the others solemnly to allow him to depart unmolested.

Then with the arms of her daughter wound around her form, the injured mother peacefully drew her last breath, surrounded by tearful eyes and saddened hearts.

We need add but little more. There were many points

still clouded, that were fated never to be cleared up and explained, but it seemed that Ambold—or Stephen Mordaunt, as was his rightful name—had loved Ethel Calcott, who refused his suit and married his brother Frank, and in a fit of wild rage, or insanity, he murdered the husband, stole the little Myra and fled across the ocean to escape the punishment of his dread crime. Paul Gisborne had been an accomplice, and caused the incarceration of the crazed mother in an asylum, from which Scipio effected her escape, some years after.

The child was heiress to great wealth, the papers to prove which, Mordaunt had stolen, and Gisborne sought him out to profit by them. In the confusion, no thought was given to this fact, and in his flight the fraticide carried off the secret with him, and the real truth was never divulged, nor the secreted papers found.

Myra Mordaunt was taken to Vincennes, by the scouts, and together with the faithful Scipio, resided there. In due course of time Barham succeeded in winning her heart, and they were married upon the same day as Peter Shafer and Lucy Barham. But before that happy time, the two scouts passed through many dangers and vicissitudes, which may, at some future time, be placed before the reader.

Of Ambold—or Mordaunt—nothing particular was ever heard, and it is probable that he died as he had lived, an outcast and vagabond, shunning all members of his own race, and consorting with the red-men.

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